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THE WRITINGS OF WALT WHITMAN

PAUMANOK EDITION

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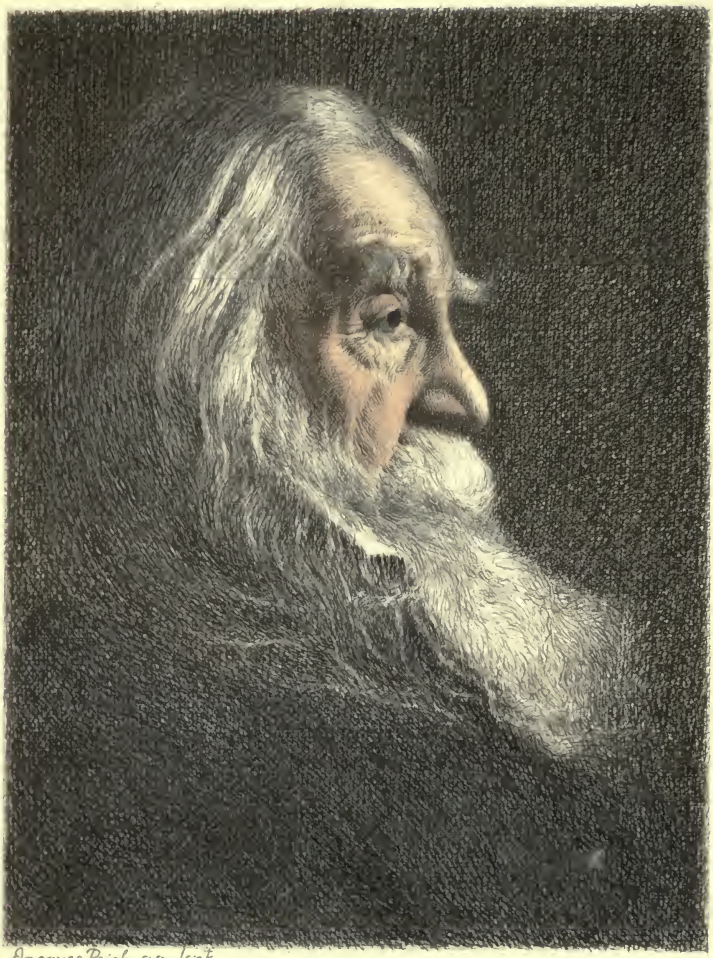

Jacques Reich aq. fort

Walt Whitman

Etched by Jacques Reich from the photograph by Thomas Eakins, Philadelphia (Whitman's last photograph)

Walt Whitman

Etched by Jacques Reich from the photograph by Thomas Eakins,
Philadelphia (Whitman's last photograph)

THE COMPLETE WRITINGS OF WALT WHITMAN

Issued under the editorial supervision of his Literary Executors, Richard Maurice Bucke, Thomas B. Harned, and Horace L. Traubel

With additional bibliographical and critical material prepared by Oscar Lovell Triggs, Ph.D.

G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK & LONDON
THE KNICKERBOCKER PRESS

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UNIV. OF
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LEAVES OF GRASS

BY

WALT WHITMAN

VOLUME I

INCLUDING A BIOGRAPHY OF WHITMAN
BY HIS LITERARY EXECUTORS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1902

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SURVIVING LITERARY EXECUTORS OF WALT WHITMAN

ENTERED AT STATIONERS HALL

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

COME, SAID MY SOUL,
SUCH VERSES FOR MY BODY LET US WRITE, (FOR WE ARE ONE,)
THAT SHOULD I AFTER DEATH INVISIBLY RETURN,
OR, LONG, LONG HENCE, IN OTHER SPHERES,
THERE TO SOME GROUP OF MATES THE CHANTS RESUMING,
(TALLYING EARTH'S SOIL, TREES, WINDS, TUMULTUOUS WAVES,)
EVER WITH PLEAS'D SMILE I MAY KEEP ON,
EVER AND EVER YET THE VERSES OWNING—AS, FIRST, I HERE AND NOW,
SIGNING FOR SOUL AND BODY, SET TO THEM MY NAME,

Walt Whitman

273539

AUTHOR'S NOTE FROM 1891–2 EDITION.

☞ As there are now several editions of L. of G., different texts and dates, I wish to say that I prefer and recommend this present one, complete, for future printing, if there should be any; a copy and fac-simile, indeed, of the text of these 438 pages. The subsequent adjusting interval which is so important to form'd and launch'd work, books especially, has pass'd; and waiting till fully after that, I have given (pages 423–438) my concluding words.

W. W.

These concluding words appear on pp. 41–66 of Volume III. of the present edition.

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Introduction

"Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same."

Such is Walt Whitman's pithy and picturesque reference to the subject of his lineage. We might for purposes of biography make the same broad statement, emphasizing it with a certain perhaps dry and yet significant particularity. It is considered consistent with the object of this, the first definite edition of Whitman's writings, to survey briefly and statistically his antecedent stock and contemplate its bearing upon his career.

Back of Whitman's grandparents the trail is vague. A chart made up from all accessible facts takes us on his father's side to the name of Abijah Whitman, who was born about 1560. From this Abijah descended a son, Zachariah, who was born in 1595. From Zachariah came Joseph Whitman, who lived in Huntington, Long Island, from 1660 to 1690. Following Joseph was the male heir through whom we trace the Whitman descent. But the name of this individual is lost, though his grandson is known to have been Nehemiah Whitman, who

was born about 1705. Nehemiah married Sarah White, whose life was a hale one, making a span from 1713 to 1803. From this couple came Jesse Whitman, the grandfather of Walt Whitman, who was born January 29, 1749, was married to Hannah Brush, April 22, 1755, and died February 12, 1803. Hannah Brush was the daughter of Tredwell Brush, and lived from October 6, 1753, to January 6, 1834. The son of Jesse and Hannah was Walter Whitman, father of Walt. Walter Whitman was born July 14, 1789, married June 8, 1816, and died July 11, 1855.

The lineage of Whitman's mother cannot be traced with any certainty to a period earlier than 1742. A suggestion of moment is contained in Walt's reference to "Dutch Kossabone, old salt, related on my mother's side, far back." The earliest reliable record discovers the name of Garrett Van Velsor, 1742 to 1812. Garrett married Mary Kossabone (presumably a granddaughter of "Old Salt"), who lived from about 1745 to 1792. A son by this match was Major Cornelius Van Velsor (1768 to 1837). Cornelius's wife was Naomi or Amy Williams, who died in February, 1826. Naomi was the daughter of Captain John Williams, whose wife was Mary Woolley. Thence came the most potent personality in the list of the poet's forbears, the girl-child of Naomi and Cornelius, Louisa Van Velsor, the mother of Walt Whitman. Louisa was born September 22,

1795, was married to Walter Whitman, June 8, 1816, and died May 23, 1873. Walt Whitman was born May 31, 1819, and died March 26, 1892.

This catalogue presents in dry root the material from which the career of Walt Whitman finds itself an issue. We assume that there are spiritual integers implied in this recital which no reiteration of dates could display. But it may be seen, nevertheless, that this reversion to Walt's pedigree is imperative.

On his father's side Walt was of English Quaker stock. His mother's strain was half Dutch and half Welsh. Louisa Whitman was in reality much more Dutch than Welsh. Hence, the union of his father and mother left the Hollander element prepotent. It is therefore correct to say that, while remaining largely English with a Welsh blend, Walt Whitman was, as pointed out by Kennedy, predominantly indebted to the Netherlandish influence for his make-up. Any such union and concentration of qualities so diverse, from an ancestry so strongly charactered, is bound to produce momentous effects. And to this convergence of racial attributes we have to add a rare complex of personal qualities not ancestrally to be accounted for. It must be remembered, too, that the Whitmans were largely farmers and mechanics or genuine producers of one sort or another. The poet's father was a house-builder, the Van Velsors were farmers and stock-raisers, the Williamses and Kossabones were sailors, and Hannah

Brush was a school-teacher. In several of these occupations Walt Whitman himself was past master, and he regarded all of them with concrete and passionate appreciation. We seem justified in suggesting that his ancestors seemed in very unusual ways to live again in his career.

Of Walt's father we know little in detail. He was a quiet, kind, industrious man, physically of large frame, solidly built, with a plain, strong face. He was regarded as markedly truthful and honest. Though a Quaker, descended from a long line of the same stock, he seems to have abandoned the perfunctory practices even of that faith. From what Walt now and then said in referring to his father, it could be seen that the father's attitude towards religion was much that of Thomas Paine and Elias Hicks, for both of whom he confessed the devoutest admiration. Like all the Whitmans this father, though fundamentally sluggish, was, when aroused, capable of memorable vehemence. And we know that Walt himself had stormy scenes with the old man. For, while Walt was never critical, he told us that his father sometimes strove to exert an undue parentalism which Walt had, out of self-respect, to resent. Walt would add that on such occasions his mother was invariably the peacemaker. Walter Whitman was a carpenter, serving his apprenticeship in New York when the nineteenth century was in its teens. He remained in the metropolis several years after his

industrial novitiate was passed. Subsequently he went to West Hills, where he entered upon business as a builder. He was recognized as a first-rate craftsman, always doing notable and conscientious work.

It must be constantly borne in mind that Walt Whitman's ancestors of both sexes, as far back as known, and in all their ramifications, with the possible exception of the great-grandfather of the poet's great-grandfather, Zachariah Whitman, who was a clergyman, were working people, possessed of little or no formal culture, and with no marked artistic tastes in any direction.

Of Walt Whitman's mother, and of the lifelong exceptional affection which existed between the two, much might be written, for, at this point, not to speak of the correspondence on both sides, the data is overwhelming. Everything goes to show how apt was Walt's own description of her: "Benignant, calm, practical, spiritual, an ideal woman."

We remember this grave woman in Camden. She was powerful and restrained, as is true of all exceptional personalities. She would have been regarded as absolutely illiterate by those who insist upon a fixed mode as necessary to culture. But though her most awkward weapon was her pen, she had much of Walt's own impressiveness of utterance even in the petty colloquialism of her domestic *entourage*. In those who were her neighbors, as well as in those who, coming to visit Walt, met her, this

conviction of simple organic energy was inevitably produced.

It may be said here that all Whitman's ancestors, as far as known, were in the exact sense first-rate people — that is, they were strong, long-lived, moral without puritanism, rational, and many of them were reputed to have been exceptionally hospitable and charitable. There was no positive trace of degeneracy anywhere in the breed. Large families seem to have been the rule with the Whitmans. For instance, Nehemiah Whitman left four sons and two daughters. We have discovered the names of twenty-two men and women, the sons and daughters of five of these six. The other child probably had a family also, and the five had certainly other children of whom we have not the names. The material runs that way right through, though the curious lapse of the line with Walt's own generation seems to show that while the stream was uncommonly vigorous as long as it lasted, its roundup was sharp and quick.

We may seem to repeat ourselves at this point unnecessarily. But we do so for the sake of certain facts. It must be understood that Walt Whitman did not come from forty generations of clergymen or professional men or warriors in or out of arms, but from an unbroken sequence of plain men in the industries — the best, while the most obscure, soil of democracy.

Hannah Brush, wife of Jesse Whitman, Walt's

grandfather, was an orphan brought up by her aunt, Vashti Platt, who owned a large farm at the east end of Suffolk county, and kept a number of slaves. Hannah Whitman was an accomplished needle woman. She had taught school several years. She was shrewd and good-looking, sensible, cheerful, healthy —a woman of what is often called "the old school."

The Whitman and Brush families contributed to the most ardent of the Continental "rebels" in Suffolk county. Major Brush was often and angrily denounced in the British proclamations and by the royalists of Long Island. He was confined for a time in the "Provost" in New York under the charge of the notorious Cunningham.

The Whitmans lived in the old home at West Hills (still standing, and used as a carriage-house and granary only a few years ago) from before the time of Nehemiah, more than a hundred years ago. They originally owned a large tract of land there, all or a large part of which descended to Nehemiah, who on his own account became a still more extensive landowner in and about West Hills. Nehemiah was born and died in the old Whitman house. One of Nehemiah's sons was a lieutenant in Col. Josiah Smith's regiment of the American army. He participated in the disastrous battle of Brooklyn and there lost his life. In "The Centenarian's Story," in *Drum Taps,* will be found some impersonal account of this portentous event.

Sarah White, Walt's great-great-grandmother, was a large, strong woman who lived to be ninety years old. She chewed tobacco, used opium, petted her slaves, and always had a crowd of "little niggers" about her. She was masculine in her character and demeanor, offensive generally to the strangers who encountered her, but a woman of sterling energy and vital force, who at bottom commanded respect and faith.

The Van Velsor family lived only two or three miles from West Hills on a solitary, picturesque road that wound up from Cold Springs Harbor.

Walt's mother's father was Major Van Velsor, and her mother's maiden name Naomi Williams. Naomi is described as a mild, gentle, sweet-tempered woman, fond of children, remarkably generous and hospitable in disposition, a good wife and parent. We are told that in dress she affected a Quaker simplicity. Naomi's mother was known as Mary Woolley. Her father was a Captain John Williams, who was owner of a vessel that plied between New York and Florida. Captain and Mrs. Williams had a family of two sons and eight daughters: John, Thomas, Amy, Sally, Peggy, Hannah, Clara and Molly are some of the names disclosed. Captain John was noted for his genial qualities and for his charity, and was known also as a man fond of physical good-living. His wife Mary was easy, good-natured, and with perhaps a deserved reputation for domestic shiftlessness.

Walt Whitman's mother's grandfather, Garrett Van Velsor, died, aged seventy, when Mrs. Whitman was eighteen years old. His wife, Mary Kossabone, had six children, three boys and three girls. Cornelius Van Velsor was the second son. Mrs. Garrett Van Velsor is said to have been a superior woman, much beloved. Garrett Van Velsor was a cloth weaver.

This business of Walt's ancestry may seem insisted upon here to the limit of tediousness. But as so much of his ancestry was in Walt, as the stream arrived in him still so jubilantly at its flood, we find that we cannot account for him by starting anywhere short of his adamic forbears. We cannot, in fact, account for him anyhow. Genius cannot be accounted for. But we may bring together the more significant biographical signs and seals of the Whitman contingent and leave them to be interpreted in the light of the singular literary fabric in which they ultimated.

Walt Whitman was born at West Hills, on Long Island. He came with the third generation on the same farm. His parents had a large family, seven boys and two girls, in which group Walt was the second in years. They were, almost without exception, remarked as being of solid, strong frame, fond of animals, and addicted to the wholesome labors and pleasures of the open air.*

* For Whitman's account of his birthplace and early life see vol. iv., this edition, pp. 9–23. In this connection read Kennedy's articles: "Dutch Traits," "Quaker Traits."—*In Re Walt Whitman.*

Walt was very ready to pay tribute to the virile qualities of his father. Yet his supreme acknowledgment always went affectionally and intellectually to the other side. He was convinced that he owed his larger traits, in so far as they were large, and in so far as they could be owed to any heredity, to this "ample woman." "Ample woman" he so frequently called her. He writes of her as "the best and sweetest woman I ever saw and ever expect to see." His mother was unquestionably of more comprehensive personality than his father, and he never tired of saying that to her he was indebted largely "for such spirituality and simplicity" as characterized him. There are mysteries about heredity, however, which make impossible that exactitude of statement which any final word in the matter would require. There is so much in character which no parent and no line of ancestry, heroic or debased, could explicate. From father and mother alike Whitman derived his magnificent physique. He was, as he said himself, "well begotten and raised by a perfect mother." Whitman describes Long Island as being "shaped like a fish, plenty of seashore, the horizon boundless, the sea air fresh and healthy, the numerous bays and creeks swarming with aquatic birds, the south side meadows covered with salt hay, the soil generally tough but being abundantly supplied with springs of the sweetest waters in the world." This was in part

"the long foreground somewhere," which in Emerson's surmise must have been enjoyed by *Leaves of Grass* "for such a start." William Douglas O'Connor has said: "No one can ever really get at Whitman's poems, and their finest lights and shades, until he has visited and familiarized himself with the freshness, scope, wildness, and sea beauty of this rugged island." Certainly in the particular localities associated with the Whitmans, the farms, the woods and the shores were eminently impressive and alluring. You may go anywhere about West Hills and Huntington and participate in an almost monotonous opulence of view. We recall in particular one point of observation known as "Jayne's Hill," almost adjacent to the old Whitman farm. It may have been that in his youth Walt Whitman lingered hereabouts, looking far over the slopes, the crests covered with trees, and the valleys between dotted with farmhouses. To the south, far off, are the just visible waters of the Atlantic; to the north, glimpses of the Sound. There could have been no training ground better fitted to furnish the concrete setting of such a book as *Leaves of Grass.*

While Walt was still a child (1823) his parents moved to Brooklyn, where he remained until his maturity. But as lad and young man Whitman frequently returned to his birthplace on visits, and spent much time in roaming through Queens and Suffolk counties. He attended the common schools of

Brooklyn until he was thirteen years of age. Thence his occupations were various. First he entered a lawyer's office. Then he spent a short period of service with a doctor. In 1833–4 he worked for a printer and learned to set type. In 1836–7, when a youth of sixteen or seventeen, he taught in country schools in Long Island and "boarded round." At this early age he began writing for the newspapers and magazines. In 1839–40 we find him establishing and publishing the *Long Islander,* which still exists at Huntington. In 1840 he went back to New York city, staying there until 1845, working meantime in printing offices as compositor. He spent his summers in the country, doing some of the practical labor of the farm. During this period he wrote a number of essays and tales which may be found in the files of the *Democratic Review.* In 1842 he published *Franklin Evans; or, The Inebriate: A Tale of the Times,* a temperance novel which had a wide contemporary circulation. This archaic production appeared in a periodical called *The New World,* in November, 1842. The announcement of its composition was made in a preceding number in a manner that was quite sensational and is worth repeating. This is what was said: "Friends of Temperance Ahoy! *Franklin Evans; or, The Inebriate: A Tale of the Times.* By a popular American author. This novel, which is dedicated to the Temperance Societies and the friends of the Temperance Cause

throughout the United States, will create a sensation, both for the ability with which it is written, as well as the interest of the subject, and will be universally read and admired. It was written expressly for the *New World,* by one of the best novelists in this country, with a view to aid the great work of reform, and rescue young men from the demon of Intemperance. The incidents of the plot are wrought out with great effect, and the excellence of its moral, and the beneficial influence it will have, should interest the friends of the Temperance Reformation in giving this Tale the widest possible circulation." Shortly before Walt died we asked him how we could get a copy of *Franklin Evans.* We told him that we had been scouring the country for some time to secure one. He replied that he did not have a copy and that he "hoped to God" our search would never be rewarded. He wished the book to remain in oblivion. He had no good opinion of this early effort in the "novel" business. We have since his death unearthed the curio. You could not read far without discovering why Whitman discountenanced it. We do not know which of its two dominant characteristics he hated most—its flamboyant phrase or its puritan odor of sanctity. He said once, in speaking of collateral matters: "I promptly got way beyond all that. But it was a strong feeling while it lasted." From no literary or philosophical or

human side could it be regarded as of weight or moment. "I do not know how I came to do it," he said: "I know I was simply in the green and crude—that's all." *Franklin Evans* is not a work of art. It is clumsy and inane. But while we are cataloguing we must give it a place. None of this early experimenting in Whitman's case grades up anywhere near the average of his matured utterance.

It was in the years between nineteen and thirty-four or thirty-five that Whitman put the edge on his culture. Only those who are sympathetically familiar with *Leaves of Grass* can understand the full meaning of that word "education" when applied to his case. It cannot be too profoundly emphasized. To a man like him it was the most comprehensive and satisfying equipment to be conceived, though many things that the schools prescribe were not here regarded as requisite. It amounted to a species of absorption into himself of the atmosphere of the common life, in town and afield. He was lost in the cosmopolitan stream. To New York, Brooklyn, and their suburban and rustic edges he devoted the worship of this peculiar personal faith. He studied not only their "outside shows," but far more their interior heart and meaning. He studied life—men, women, and children. He travelled on equal terms with every one. He liked people and people liked him. He knew most men far better than they knew them-

selves. And his apprenticeship of these years was to the concrete spiritual as well as to the abstract. Note how thoroughly conversant he became with the shops, houses, sidewalks, ferries, factories, taverns, religious assemblies, political meetings, carousings, and the vast paraphernalia of urban civilization. He had every rustic instinct for out of doors. He delighted in the phenomena of thoroughfares. But he did not lose in life the meaning of life. He knew hospitals, poorhouses, prisons, and their inmates. He passed freely in and about districts of the city which are inhabited by the worst characters. He knew evil people, and many of them knew him. He learned to tolerate squalor, vice, and ignorance. He saw the good ("there is always so much more good than the self-righteous think") and the bad that mixed in the same blood, and he realized that which would excuse and justify a wanton life. It has been said that these people, even the worst of them, while entire strangers to Walt Whitman, quite invariably received him with courtesy and gratitude. Thousands who have known the man personally or have derived equivalent impressions from his books, will dwell upon the generic magnetism of his presence. It is not surprising that he went among the ulterior classes enjoying the same unhesitating and unequivocal renown. Many of the most dubious of those characters became attached to him. His interest in the

fakir and the huckster, in the ragamuffin and the thief, in the old men and old women of the submerged tenth, was no humbug profession intended to subserve a false repute. Many men intellectually apprehend democracy. But in Whitman democracy had found itself fact as well as theory. Whitman patronized nobody. Even the outcasts were to him as good as the best, though temporarily dimmed and blurred. He received the more fortunate classes on the same plane. He was equally hospitable with all. Merchants, lawyers, doctors, scholars and writers were among his friends. But the people he knew best and liked most, who knew him best and liked him most, were at neither extreme of social preference. They were the farmers, mechanics, carpenters, pilots, drivers, masons, printers, deck-hands, teamsters, drovers, and so forth, who constitute the creative background of our civilization. With these, with their wives and children, with their old mothers and fathers, exquisite relations developed. He easily adjusted his life to any circle. No man was more gallant than he in his informal way could become. He had all that was essential in the culture of four hundreds, and then, in addition, had a simple quality of direct approach which took him to the average man and kept him there a royally cherished figure.

Whitman made himself familiar with life, not by reading trade reports and statistics, or by any extra-

neous or hair-splitting theory, but by loafing and living more or less with mechanics, who were often his intimate friends. He visited the foundries, shops, rolling-mills, slaughter-houses, factories, shipyards, wharves, shops, and every known hostelry of labor. He attended clam-bakes, races, auctions, weddings, sailing and bathing parties, christenings, and all shades and degrees of public and private entertainment. And he shared without constraint all pros and cons in the popular experience. He was a frequent speaker at debating societies. On Sundays he occasionally went to church. But he did not prefer one church above another, or all churches to no church. If there had been Buddhist temples, Mohammedan mosques, and Confucian joss-houses accessible, he would undoubtedly have visited those with equal interest and sympathy. He had no formal religious feeling whatever and no inclination towards any perfunctory symbolism in worship. And yet no man ever more devoutly honored religion or was more capable of apprehending the sound root of the religious life. But the religious life to him was not at all an affair necessarily of a church. It was as well an affair of the office, the loom or the scaffold.

Whitman liked to loaf in libraries and museums. There was in his youth in New York a very inclusive collection of Egyptian antiquities, and for over two years, off and on, he spent many an hour

examining it. This is noted because it serves to indicate the quiet way he had of getting to the sources of culture and perfecting his grasp of essential knowledge. He is often spoken of as unlearned. And if learning is a perfunctory exercise, gone through with to satisfy the rote of a text-book, he was unlearned. But no man had, in broad grasp of social law, drawn from basic apprehension of the sciences and of historic perspective, a more positive equipment than he possessed.

Reading did not perform any exclusive part in Walt Whitman's education. He found he could get more from things themselves than from pictures or descriptions of them drawn from others. His aim was to absorb humanity and modern life, and he neglected no means, books included, by which this aim could be furthered. A favorite mode of study with him was to take an early breakfast and then go, by stage or on foot, to some solitary spot by the seashore, generally Coney Island (conserving a very different purpose from that which it now enjoys), taking with him a knapsack containing a bit of plain food, a towel, and a book. He would spend the day in this solitude, walking, thinking, observing the sea and sky, bathing, reading, or perhaps reciting aloud Homer and Shakespeare as he walked about the beach. It would be hard to imagine a life more happily educed. He speaks of himself as "wandering, amazed" at his "own lightness and

glee." Whatever he did or saw gave him pleasure. At one period of his life his cardinal enjoyment in New York was riding up and down Broadway on omnibuses. He would sit front with the driver and watch the crowds and vehicles, and breast, in a species of exhilaration, the limitless push of the swarming streets. He was a lover of "populous pavements." Or he would cross the East river, half the day or half the night in the pilot-houses of Brooklyn ferry-boats, watching the multitudes coming and going, observing the sights on the waters, feeling the quiver of the boat from the strong beat of the paddles, and the rush through the yielding water. At other times he would go out to sea with his friends of the pilot-boats, and all day and all night enjoy the air, the motion of the waves, the speed of the boat, the isolation, the deep feeling of communion with free nature and the great brine. The simplest pursuits, even those regarded as commonplace, suited him best. He was perfectly sound and well, and consequently all life's delights were matters of course. Along in his twenty-third year he became well known as a speaker at Democratic mass meetings. But he was never a rabid partisan. A few years later we find his political fealties shifted to the Republican party. In the closing decade of his life his sympathies, so far as they were for a party at all, were Democratic again. His speaking was mostly done in New York City and down at country

gatherings on Long Island. Though he took (in Brooklyn and New York, 1840–45) no strenuous personal part in political controversy, he watched events with a profound and concerned eye. He foresaw the drift assumed by the heated and violent debate North and South. He was stern as towards slavery, but in all else that characterized this acrimonious period he was without bias.

Though this practical, tumultuous, varied, and generally outdoor life was full of inspiration to Walt Whitman, there had come to his young maturity one unequalled enjoyment—the Italian opera. And the climax of all opera to him was the singing of the famous contralto Alboni. He tells us that he did not miss one of her performances. He has acknowledged that the influence upon him of Alboni's singing was a most important factor in his poetic growth. He speaks of her as "the lustrous orb, Venus contralto, the blooming mother, sister of loftiest Gods." The opera always remained to him a source of great delight. He heard all the good bands, orchestras, and soloists who came to New York from 1840 to 1860, and many passages in his poetic and prose work can be traced back to such inspirations. He had the habit of jotting down these impressions at the moment or with little delay. We possess many of the note-books in which such memoranda occurs in great abundance. Of the later movement in music which came through Wagner he knew but

little. But he said: "I know from the way you fellows talk of it that the music of Wagner is the music of the 'Leaves.'"

Whitman in these years ran up and down the entire gamut of social legerdemain. The comprehensiveness of this tutelage is indicated by John Burroughs in his first book about Whitman — a book to which Whitman himself contributed invaluable features in advice and revision:

"For a few years he now seems to be a member of that light battalion of writers for the press who, with facile pen, compose tale, report, editorial or what-not, for pleasure and a living; a peculiar class; always to be found in any large city; once in a while he appears at the political mass meetings as a speaker. He is on the Democratic side, at the time going for Van Buren for President, and, in due course, for Polk. He spoke in New York and down in Long Island, where he was made much of. Through this period (1840–55), without entering into particulars, it is enough to say that he sounded all experiences of life, with all their passions, pleasures and abandonments. He was young, in perfect bodily condition, and had the city of New York and its ample opportunities around him. I trace this period in some of the poems of *Children of Adam,* and occasionally in other parts of his book, including *Calamus.*"

Whitman was occupied during 1847 and the year

following as editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle.* And it was in 1848, when nearly thirty years of age, and after having lived so far entirely on Long Island and in Brooklyn and New York, that he started on a long tour through the Middle, Southern, and Western States. In *Specimen Days* he erroneously dates this trip 1849. In this sally South he was accompanied by his brother Jeff. Jeff was the only one of the Whitmans who, outside his mother, entered into relations of actual intimacy with Walt. And even Jeff never seemed to have any conception of Walt as a figure of which history would take much cognizance.

Walt had been engaged, while still at home in New York, in organizing the staff of a daily newspaper, the *Crescent,* which was to be at once started in New Orleans. He reached that city by steamer Friday night (February 25th), and the first number of the *Crescent* was issued on Sunday, March 5th. The brothers remained at work on the paper, Walt in the editorial rooms and Jeff in the office, until near the end of May, in which month, on Saturday the 27th, they left by steamer for the North. Several of their letters home and part of a journal kept by Walt at this time are still extant and in our possession. They seem to have thoroughly enjoyed their visit South, and would doubtless have stayed there much longer had not something, the water or the climate, proved deleterious to Jeff's health.

They ascended the Mississippi, crossed to Chicago, and took steamer there by way of lakes Michigan, Huron, St. Clair, and Erie to Buffalo. Walt wrote at the time in this way about the conclusion of his trip: "We arrived on Monday evening, and spent that night and a portion of next day examining the place. In the morning of the next day got in the cars and went out to Niagara. Great God! What a sight! We went under the Falls, saw the whirlpool and all the other things, including the suspension bridge. On Tuesday evening we started for Albany and travelled all night. From the time daylight afforded us a view of the country found it very rich and well cultivated. Every few miles there were large towns and villages. On Wednesday evening arrived in Albany. Spent the evening in loitering about. Next morning started down the Hudson in the *Alida*. Never before did I look upon such grand and varied scenery. Arrived about five o'clock in Brooklyn. Found all well."

This trip probably had far more significance in Whitman's future than is generally known or could be exploited here. It is the period of his career, detail of which is absolutely missing. There was an atmosphere of mysteriousness unconsciously thrown about the episode. He occupied himself during his stay in New Orleans with observing the *raison d'être* of Southern life, much as he had done previously with cities North. His associates were

in all classes and grades. No element of the caste mix-up escaped him. He appreciated the fact that he was experiencing novel conditions for which the North furnished no parallel. The profound influence it left with him is indicated in his after work. He was an apt, almost a miraculous, student. We never knew a time up to his latest days in which this power deserted him.

Whitman is often regarded as having been indolent. And yet, as a matter of fact, he kept himself at all times busy. In 1850–51 we find him instrumental in establishing and publishing *The Freeman,* in Brooklyn. It was about this period, and until 1854, that he got into the business of building and selling houses of the middle class in Brooklyn. Here he had hit fiscally the most prosperous venture of his life. Had he continued in this gilt-edged course he would probably have accumulated a fortune. But he knew the danger of such success and retired in time. What had he to do with the making of money or the losing of money? He was neither for nor against money. He was for the human spirit. And the next act in his career was the launching of his extracontinental emprise. He deliberately surrendered all prospects of what is called success in life for a mad speculation.

The year 1855 was formally the red-letter year of Whitman's life. To the surprise of every one he printed and issued his first edition of *Leaves of Grass.* No one had had any suggestion of what was to

come. The hidden purpose of his life was suddenly revealed.

Up to this time, Whitman, as we have seen, had been a printer, a school-teacher, a newspaper editor, a story-writer, a carpenter, a house-builder. These were really asides and digressions, none of them becoming any considerable feature of his deliberated life. From his entrance to the period of his maturity his serious task was the composition of *Leaves of Grass*. This book was conceived and executed in the freedom and reticence of the broadest opportunity. All that he felt and knew was focussed to one point and included in the simple letter of his vigorous scripture. And, though none of his contemporaries suspected the revelation he was to make, it is seen by reference to his note-books of the prior years that the impetus of his faith had been of one character from the start. He had long felt and thought towards it inchoately. Now power was come and he could speak. A hundred men have tried to describe the extraordinary poem, but in this attempt no one has more than temporally succeeded. *Leaves of Grass* is, in fact, in itself cosmic and baffles all adequate account, just as does the ostensible and so-called objective universe. In the first place, it is a picture of America in the nineteenth century. All America is in it. Nothing is lacking. The transcripts of our manifolded new world are poured out one after the other in an almost limitless stream. We are presented, not seriatim but

in a consecutive arrangement of intermitted and, as it were, casual flashes, with the original wilderness of North America and its first colonization from the Old World—its aborigines, explorers, trappers, pioneers, settlers, farmers, planters, miners, slave and free negroes. It includes all types, Southern and Northern, West and East. It embraces the manufacturer, the trader, the sailor, the fisherman, the rich and the poor, and especially paid tribute to laborers in every field of work that distinguishes our industrialism. Then it portrays the country itself—its lakes, rivers, lagoons, canyons, mountains, coasts, bays, ports, cities, and boundaries; its deserts, swamps, its pastoral plains; its innumerable farms with all their products—wheat, cotton, maize, rye, sugar, rice, cattle, wood, maple, fir, poplar, cedar, live-oak, cypress; its interminable southern wildernesses of cane-brake, rushes, and swamp-grass; its fruits, South and North—the orange, pineapple, papaw, persimmon, grape, peach, apple, melon, pear, cherry, plum, strawberry. All elements of its government are there—national, state, municipal. The sky overhead—its sun, moon, stars, meteors, clouds, rain, snow, hail, fogs—as well as the smack and solidity of the solid ground underneath, with all between, are arrayed. Nothing is left out. The anatomy, physiology, psychology of man is exploited. All family relations, all usages of life, all politics and history, are betrayed. And the Revolutionary war and the war of Secession. And all

thoughts, suggestions, aspirations, pictures, city and country, by day and night. *Leaves of Grass* is the book of peace and war, of the most daring speculation, of an archangelic philosophy, as well as of platitudes and the commonplace. It is for outdoor health, for land and sea, for good-will, for America, for all the earth, for all nations, for the so-called common people. In it every claim, ideal or line is tempered by every other line, claim or ideal; every wish and right is tempered by every other right and wish. All this and much more makes the book, as we have said, a veritable cosmos, a universe of the self-sufficient soul. And then this is, after all, nothing but the shell of the book. Its substance is Whitman himself—one of the great spiritual forces of the modern world. Whitman is the book, and the book is Whitman. And this Whitman is a thousand times vaster than either the book or the man. This Whitman is a new efflux of spirit. It is not a man at all in any primary or physiological sense. America is specified because it belongs to him, in a sort is Whitman—his outside shell —but the individual man, Walt Whitman, cosmically construed, is the blood and brawn of the book. All the crusadings of his outward life, and with them all spiritual entrances and exits, are reflected in artless but trenchant songs. And as he seeks to include in his poem of poems all that is objective to him—that is to say, all the world, and, above all, all America—so he equally seeks to include and portray all that is

subjective in him, and if in him, then equally, though often obscured and unconscious of itself, in every one. In depicting natural objects, as well as men and women, Whitman necessarily and simply reports what he sees. He may seem to surround them with a halo — to lift them into an atmosphere of glory and splendor that at first sight seems exaggerated and false. But ultimately (and this is the purpose of the book) you are sure to discover that he has taken simply the true view, our old view having been inadequate and misleading. But to say that Whitman speaks of himself in one place and of the so-called external world in another is to use the language of convention, not of truth. As Whitman sees it, and as it really is, the external universe is Whitman, and Whitman is the external universe. They are not two but one. And this is true not of Whitman only but of every person. "Was somebody asking to see the soul?" he asks. And he answers: "See your own shape and countenance, persons, substances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks, and sands." For, says he in another place: "Objects gross and the unseen soul are one." So that Whitman's absorption in the physical, the objective, is not, as some have thought, atomic, but spiritual, after a fashion and degree heretofore unknown.

Though Whitman is often labelled he escapes all labels. There is no one influence by which he can be enclosed. He is too big for parties, partialisms

or schisms. He is too free for the bondsman and too much in bond for the licentious. Whitman is thoroughly oriented. He has caught the sacred spell. And yet in the very process of orientation he wings his spirit beyond the obligations of its ceremonialism. But Whitman could not be roundly valued with the mysticism left out. He is the rallying centre of East and West. In his symbols the mystical abstract strikes light with the mystical concrete. Because Whitman was a big man who weighed two hundred pounds, and could laugh at a joke, and could write poems about sex, some good people, even some of his biographers, have spelled his name in letters too gross even for censure. But Whitman will get his own only in that day and generation which recognizes in his text the majesty of its superphysical ascents. To write of Whitman and omit the mystical is to write of the universe by ignoring it. For Whitman comes to literature not out of New York alone but just as much from Singapore. He has no altar which will not serve as well in a Buddhist temple as in a Christian church and honor both. Or even on the highroad. The roots of Whitman go back of visible men and verified history to races and zones pretercivilized.

Such observations take Whitman's democracy away from geography and give it to the spirit.

Whitman, it must be understood, does not pick and choose. He does not look round for subjects or

beautiful things or ugly things or for good or bad in morals or for shining lights or for eclipses. The art that so deliberately narrows its privileges would not corellate his ampler designs. To him all nature and all humanity is sacred, and is to be sung and celebrated. So it is not his scheme to include in his book the accepted subjects only, but all conceivable subjects; for, to Whitman, in man and in woman, in nature and in animals, all processes, functions, relations, instincts, passions, since God made and ordained them, are throughout pure and good. But Whitman has another reason, and a stronger one, for including certain forbidden subjects. To him the topic of sex is as unobjectionable as any other topic whatever. Yet by other poets, as in the world at large, it is shunned and tabooed, and what in itself is innocent is made to appear vile. Whitman thinks that the feeling that there is something intrinsically impure in the sex relation is a false feeling, and that it has done and still does immense injury to the race. He wishes to oppose and if possible to destroy and remove that feeling, both in the interest of truth and in the interest of morals. So he takes the bull by the horns, and glorifies sex just as he glorifies patriotism or courage, treating the one in the same open, matter-of-course manner as the other. Whitman was himself thoroughly free from all antique notions as to sex. If this had not been so he never could have written his *Children of Adam* poems. He could not but ques-

tion the feeling, so essentially discreditable to humanity, that there is an ineradicable uncleanness in sex, as sex, that does not attach to any other of our organs or functions. Therefore he knew perfectly well what he was doing and how these passages would be received at first. He was under no illusion and was not carried away by any passion or fancy. He felt sure he knew what should be done, and he was going to do it. Hence, we find him declaring: "And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I am determined to tell you with courageous clear voice to prove you illustrious." And in another place he is still more definite:

"Through me many long dumb voices . . .
Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd."

He knows this topic is forbidden, but he is for that very reason determined to tear away the veil. He means to let in the open air and the sunlight, and to disinfect, clarify, and transfigure that which has been maligned.

At this juncture, and while treating of *Leaves of Grass* in the abstract,—while trying to get at Whitman's handiwork by such light as comes to us through its first drafts and culminations,—it may not be amiss to make a slight digression. It is not our purpose to introduce a critical estimate of Whitman's position in the literature of the country and of the world, but we may be pardoned if out of an abundant appreciation

we select what in our judgment are some essential features of his message. Rather than intending to come with any explication between Whitman's work and his readers, we wish to step and stay aside, and let interpretation take care of itself. And yet we must not hesitate to express the certain heres and theres which may serve to indicate what it is in Whitman which makes him to us a gigantic force in the recent literature of the race. This opinion will not take the place of any other opinion, and will not have any authority. It is not expert opinion. It is only one opinion, contributed with thousands of opinions, some, no doubt, of more and some of less validity, and asks with the rest only the privilege to be heard.

Leaves of Grass is one poem, in its unity analogous to *Faust*. It may superficially seem disjointed, but its essential coherence will eventually be acknowledged. It is the outgrowth and completion of a profound artistic scheme, austerely conceived and rigidly adhered to. The book is characterized by an epic consistency. Its foundation is a man, moral, æsthetic, religious, emotional, meditative, patriotic. It tallies this man from the cradle to the grave. Nay, more, before the cradle and beyond the grave, limitless either way, accepting neither a beginning nor an end. Within the concept of a single mind we discover an idealistic philosophy akin to that of certain of the great Teutonic systems — the recognition of the essential identity of the spiritual and material

worlds — but one that is more poetic, and in the end triumphantly conclusive.

It is of crucial moment to apply to such a poem as the *Song of Myself* the test of the larger criticism. This poem celebrates or glorifies Walt Whitman, body, mind, and soul, with all the functions and attributes that are implied, and then, by a subtle but inevitable implication, becomes equally a song of exaltation, as rendered by any man or woman, upon the beauty and perfection of his or her body and spirit, the material being treated as equally divine with the immaterial. As quickly as you realize the Walt Whitman of this song you take his place. Beyond such a primary significance the poem has sublime import as the chant of cosmical man — of the whole universe, considered as self-sufficient in the immortality of man. And then, from still another point of view, the poem becomes a commanding hymn in exaltation of what is known as external nature. To get a little nearer the book each reader must himself in heroic pride become its author. Whitman was always saying to us: "The book is as much yours as mine — yes, even as much your actual handiwork as mine." And so we find him assuring his reader:

"I know perfectly well my own egotism,
Know my omnivorous lines, and must not write any less,
And would fetch you, whoever you are, flush with myself.

. . . . . .

"It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you,
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd."

Then he declares: "Who touches this book touches a man." And now we commence to understand what he means when he speaks of democracy. He does not offer you ease and a chair. He knows he is a hard proposition. He is not surprised or pained when he is rejected.

"But these leaves conning, you con at peril,
For these leaves and me you will not understand,
They will elude you at first, and still more afterwards, I will certainly elude you,
Even while you think you had unquestionably caught me, behold!
Already you see I have escaped from you."

Whitman does not desire to be misunderstood. But he would rather have you misunderstand him than misunderstand himself. He is stimulating in his indirection, and purposes having his reader independently think out a portion of the argument. He does not design to stand for you. He expects to see you stand for yourself. Observe his continuity. He is accused of playing false. But while he was without formal, he was always distinguished for essential, logic. You learn to acquiesce in his notion of form and sequence. And yet his dithyrambs may not convey the same meaning to every reader alike.

Such philosophy, such insight, is ultra visioned. He simply demands that we step out of bond — that we look a little for ourselves. We must get less by reflection and by reflections of reflections. Every man who is willing to pay the price is competent to secure adequate spiritual leverage. Whitman warns men against anything that would reduce in them the quality of an initiating personality.

"Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.
The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

. . . . . .

"Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life.
Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair."

Whitman was tenaciously determined in this idea. He gets to it all ways in both prose and verse,

and in such diversity of statement as to finally impress even the skepticism he distrusts. We have long enough tarried with the ancients and the honorables in religion and philosophy—followed approved systems and schools. We have taken too much for granted and have lacked the courage to look for ourselves. Now he proposes to have us face all things, all shifts of fortune, with confidence and faith, living thereby a free and joyous and rounded life. He recurs again and again to the principle that governments have but one object—the preservation of liberty. And this declaration he extends with continent inevitableness to all institutions. He refuses privilege and favor. He will not take from society that which all cannot have the counterpart of on the same terms. To favorites of arrogant political fortune and their superservitors, great and small, he vehemently says:

"The President is there in the White House for you, it is not you who are here for him,
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here for them. . . .
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,
Sculptures and monuments and anything inscribed anywhere are tallied in you."

He refuses to abstract himself from the average man. He has no semi demi democracies to be sold for powers or preferences or to superior persons. He draws one line for all. And the elements of the

citizenship he enforces are not complex. They are exigent and drastic but not exacting. In one place he alludes to the democrat as to one

"Who says, indifferently and alike *How are you, friend?* to the President at his levee,
And he says *Good day, my brother,* to Cudge that hoes in the sugar field,
And both understand and know that his speech is right."

In the anti-slavery controversies of the last century, when the politicians were wrong, when judges were too generally subservient, when the pulpit was too apt to see the slaveholder and miss the Christ, Walt Whitman declared in the sternest tone:

"Man shall not hold property in man.
The least develop'd person on earth is just as important and sacred to himself or herself as the most develop'd person is to himself or herself."

Look at it from what angle you may you discover Whitman imperturbably associating his humanistic philosophy with the fate of the mass. He saw no gifts, no prophecies, no spiritual futures, whose august suffrage was not universally decreed. He dealt nowhere in remnants. When Whitman was through no man was left out.

"Each of us is inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here."

Introduction

Leaves of Grass offers a species of Bible to our modern democracy. What the Vedas were to Brahmanism, the Law and the Prophets to Judaism, the Avesta to Zoroastrianism, the Pauline writings to Christianity, *Leaves of Grass* will be to the future of American civilization. Not the special American civilization we have to-day developed, or the civilization of any one continent, but that American civilization which, without a single geographical spot to finally settle upon, will consummate itself in the international democracies. Though Emerson and other men of letters were uncompromising advocates of a national literature, which was to be purely American in its character, none of them seemed fully to understand in what way that literature must differ from any other. Whitman advocated a radical and abrupt change in form and spirit. "The great poems," Shakespeare included, he claims, "are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of democracy. The models of our literature, as we get it from other lands, have had their birth in courts, and basked and grown in castle sunshine; all smell of princes' favors. Of workers of a certain sort we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learned, all complacent. But, touched by the national test, or tried by the standards of democratic personality, they wither to ashes. And what is there in the modern world that is of value

unless the underlying spirit of democracy pervades it?"

Again and again Whitman insists that our poets must be singers of some such democracy. America demands a poetic movement that is as bold, modern, inclusive, and cosmical as she is herself—a poetry for the people, with whom the cultured few are included, and not for an elect class, to which are awarded all the choice prizes of life. Then he looks out upon the land. He is awed by its magnitude. He paces off its length and breadth. He climbs its Rockies. He threads its prairies. He fords its Mississippi. He stands in awe, though not dread, before its half-revelations and its unthinkable tremendousness. He notes its herculean problems—everywhere vastness, grandeur. And then he observes that every other country has a literature that will bear some comparison to its physical and social importance. He is provoked to prophecy. Whitman asks: "What has America?" Possessing the richest mass of material ever furnished a nation, "the first sign of proportionate native, imaginative soul, and first-class work to match is, so far, wanting." Whitman had reached this stage in his speculation when he determined to create an American poem. In *Leaves of Grass* he proposed to sing a song of commensurate breadth. He dilates upon his task. He never saw life small. Life to him was ever and for ever "immense in passion, pulse and power,

cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine."

Twelve poems made up the original 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass,* which was printed in the establishment of Andrew and James Rome, at the corner of Cranberry and Fulton streets, Brooklyn, the author himself setting up most of the type. We will append a pithy reference to this period of Whitman's life, furnished in 1881 by a person who met him at close range:

"Walt Whitman had a small printing office and book store on Myrtle avenue, Brooklyn, where after his return from the South he started the *Freeman* newspaper, first as a weekly, then as a daily, and continued it a year or so. He always earned his own living. I thought him a very natural person. He wore plain, cheap clothes, which were always particularly clean. Everybody knew him; everyone, almost, liked him. We all of us [referring to the other members of his family—brothers, sisters, father and mother], long before he published *Leaves of Grass,* looked upon him as a man who was to make his mark in the world. He was always a good listener, the best I ever knew—of late years, I think, he talks somewhat more. In those early years (1849–54) he talked very little indeed. When he did talk his conversation was remarkably pointed, attractive, and clear. When *Leaves of Grass* first appeared I thought it a great book, but that the man

was greater than the book. His singular coolness was an especial feature. I have never seen him excited in the least degree; never heard him swear but once. He was quite gray at thirty. He had a look of age in his youth, as he now has a look of youth in his age."

The exact years covered by the early note-books in our possession cannot be ascertained. It had been continuously his habit to make copious memoranda in the open—in the street, on the boats, at the seaside, in the fields. It is to be recalled that he quit house-building in the spring of 1855 to print and publish his amazing songs. "When the book aroused such a tempest of anger and condemnation everywhere," he said, "I went off to the east end of Long Island and Peconic Bay. Then came back to New York with the confirmed resolution, from which I never afterwards wavered, to go on with my poetic enterprise in my own way and finish it as well as I could." As exposing the diverse impressions produced by the book at the time, we should remember that while Whittier threw the copy sent him into the fire, Emerson sat down and wrote Whitman the marvellous letter in which he said: "I greet you at the beginning of a great career." At this time there were more Whittiers than Emersons. But the Emersons have prevailed. He had got into the fight which was to last out his life. Walt Whitman from this period proceeded to fulfil the scheme so

long speculated upon and finally announced. What he had done was no half-way forage across alien acres. It was a splendid assertion of integral power exerted in defence of a spiritual heritage.

Leaves of Grass grew rapidly. In 1856 a second edition appeared—a small 16mo, 384-page volume, containing thirty-two poems, published by Fowler & Wells. This, again, had little or no sale. The same howl continued. Whitman saw that he was misunderstood. He knew that he had either to retrace his steps, to apologize for what he had done, or let recognition take care of itself. So he decided to let recognition take care of itself. But meanwhile he conceived plans by which to create some popular foretaste of himself. Among other schemes elaborately surveyed but never consummated was the idea of going up and down the country delivering and selling a series of lectures. It can be seen that he had given much thought to the subject of oratory. The reader may refer to the matter on that subject to be found in volume eight of this edition. A document indicating the seriousness of this intention to lecture was discovered by us at his death. It is written on both sides of a small piece of stiff paper intended as the front cover of a book which was to contain "Walt Whitman's Lectures." He had inscribed on this sheet: "15 cents. Walt Whitman's Lectures." Then he announces: "I desire to go by degrees through

all These States, especially West and South and through Canada: Lecturing (my own way) henceforth my employment, my means of earning my living, subject to the work elsewhere alluded to, that takes precedence. Of this, or through the list, present and to come (see last page of cover), any will be recited before any society or association of friends, or at the defrayment of some special person.

"AMERICA: A PROGRAM &C.

"Some plan I seek to have the vocal delivery of my lectures free; but at present a low price of admission, one dime, or my fee for reciting here $10.00 (When any distance expenses in addition).

"Each lecture will be printed with its recitation; needing to be carefully perused afterwards. I personally sell the printed copies.

"BROOKLYN, NEW YORK: 1858.

"Trade supplied by De Witt, 162 Nassau Street, New York."

Then over the leaf on the inside page of the cover the writing continues as follows:

"*Notice—Random Intentions—Two Branches*

"Henceforth two co-expressions. They expand, amicable from common sources, but each with individual stamps by itself.

"First POEMS, *Leaves of Grass,* as of INTUITIONS, the Soul, the Body (male or female), descending below laws, social routine, creeds, literature, to

celebrate the inherent, the red blood, one man in himself, or one woman in herself. Songs of thoughts and wants hitherto suppressed by writers. Or it may as well be avowed to give the personality of Walt Whitman, out and out, evil and good, whatever he is or thinks, that sharply set down in a book, the Spirit commanding it; if certain outsiders stop puzzled, or dispute, or laugh, very well.

"Second, Lectures, of Reasoning, Reminiscences, Comparison, Politics, the Intellectual, the Esthetic, the desire for knowledge, the sense of richness, refinement and beauty in the mind, as an act, a sensation—from an American point of view. Also, in Lectures, the meaning of Religion, as a statement, every thing from an American point of view.

"Of the above so far both would increase the bearings upon themselves, not at any time finished any more than any live operation of nature is but unfolding, urging onward and outward. By degrees to fashion for These States (it may as well be avowed) two athletic volumes, the first to speak of the permanent soul (which speaks for all, material too, but can be understood only by the like of itself —the same being the reason that what is wisdom—music to one is gibberish to another). But the second, temporary, shall be the speech of the attempt at Statements, Argumentation, Art. Both to illustrate America—illustrate the whole, not merely sections, members, throbbing from the heart, the West around

the great Lakes, or along the flowing Ohio, or Missouri or Mississippi.

"Curious, much advertising his own appearance and views (it cannot be helped), offensive to many, too free, too savage and natural, candidly owning that he has neither virtue or knowledge—such, *en passant,* of Walt Whitman, going his own way to his own work—because that, with the rest, is needed—because on less terms how can he get what he is resolved to have to himself, and to America?"

Whitman did things lazily but was not lazy. His leisurely manner was too much for the unwary. He was considered indolent. But this explicit document just produced shows that he took no mental vacations. He was always doing what the noisy man could not do. He was always employed with something that contributed to his master-task. He was no desultory craftsman. He argued all his life out with himself on paper. He asked questions and answered them, argued against himself and justified himself; he appeared as self plaintiff and self defendant, in all the exigencies of his difficult but illuminated career. He never literally attempted to establish his surveys in the lecture field, but he lived his plans out to the last item in the unfoldment of the *Leaves.*

In 1860, Whitman issued through Thayer & Eldridge, of Boston, the third edition of *Leaves of*

Grass—a handsome book of four hundred and fifty-six pages. But the war came on and found his publishers with enough Southern credits to swamp them. The plates of the book were sold at auction, and were purchased for a song by Richard Worthington, of New York, who for years and up to the time of Whitman's death persistently produced one edition after another, and piratically sold them. These plates were purchased and are now owned by the literary executors, and this edition is no longer on the market.

After what Whitman himself has written about the war and his share in its gains and losses, it would be gratuitous and feeble for us to enlarge upon that event here. But something must be said in order to keep our record at least statistically unbroken. "But for the war," we have heard him remark, "the *Leaves* would not have been complete." Whitman had dreamed democracy, written democracy, talked democracy. Now he lived democracy. He showed by concrete example what his summons meant. He answered his own call. Had his act failed all his words would have failed. That is what he intended we should know when he said he saw that the *Leaves* climaxed in the war. What had gone before was prophecy. What came after was reaffirmation. But, in the stormy interval between the resplendent comradeship he had announced received a visible transfiguration.

Whitman's brother George had volunteered and gone to the front. One morning in the middle of October, 1862, just after the first Fredericksburg battle, Whitman saw by the military news in the *New York Herald* that George was wounded, it was thought seriously. At an hour's notice Walt started for the Rappahannock. He did not realize at the time that this signalized his permanent removal from New York and Brooklyn, and yet it is a fact that he never again returned to either city except to pay an occasional visit. He wintered partly with the Army of the Potomac. It was thus he began his historic service in the hospitals. Out of so innocent a beginning so much resulted. He did not go South intending to do what eventually his tranquil spirit spontaneously got into the habit of doing. The work fell to him in the drift of events. He loyally accepted its responsibilities. With more than martial heroism he matured the promises of his youthful proclamations.

Try to conceive of Whitman as an impromptu nurse in the crowded hospitals, where thousands lay sick, wounded, helpless, dying. It has been estimated that he contributed in some way to the comfort of at least 100,000 of these waifs of the war. North and South were all one. He served where service was needed. He never looked for men who had merits but for men who had wounds. He wrote letters home for these men. He read to them. He

ran their errands. In his knapsack he carried paper, postage stamps, oranges, and miscellaneous articles of comfort. From many he received the final message and to many he imparted the last word and caress. The memoranda of this period, published in the present edition of his works, contains the best story of the war extant. This memorabilia — poetic and prose — presents war in aspects never before quite so graphically apprehended. It is handled in a new way, by picture and spiritual allegory, and with impassioned emotional interludes. Without containing one specific argument against war it constitutes the most powerful arraignment of war in our literature, and perhaps in any literature.

Whitman's service in the hospitals was without pay. Possessing no ulterior resources, he turned incidentally to journalism for an income, doing some correspondence, notably for the *New York Times.* And these years of unflinching work and terrible suspense and excitement changed him from a young to an old man. The moral strain was constant and immense. Any even cursory reference to a few of his representative poems in *Drum-Taps,*—for instance, to *A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest,* and *Come Up from the Fields Father,* and *Vigil Strange,* — as well as to the more graphic of the *Wound Dresser* letters, will show without argument what such a man must have suffered. So he broke down. Doctors called his trouble "hospital malaria." But it ran deeper than

that. It was heartbreak. His splendid physique was sapped by labor and watching, but it was still more denuded by the lavish emotional outlay involved. His magnetism was incredible and exhaustless. He could have changed the atmosphere of a sepulchre. The doctors had a way of saying of some patient about whose fate they were puzzled: "He is a hopeless case. Turn him over to Whitman. Whitman will save him."

It was after the war that Whitman went into the service of the Interior Department. The chief of this bureau — Harlan, of Iowa — was told that Whitman was the author of an indecent book. To satisfy himself of the truth of this charge he one evening surreptitiously abstracted Whitman's working copy of the *Leaves* from a drawer of his desk, and just as secretively returned it before Whitman next day reported for duty. Harlan was convinced that his informant was correct. Whitman was forthwith discharged. The incident was much discussed. Even as a reminiscence it invites contempt and challenge. It would be easy to pillory Harlan. But he has sufficiently pilloried himself. Such an outrage is best left to its own immortal infamy. Then we do owe something to Harlan. But for his act we never would have had O'Connor's classical polemic on *The Good Gray Poet,* which Henry J. Raymond pronounced "the most brilliant monograph in American literature." Do Harlan justice. He was

not narrower than his mind. He did the thing which to his belated intelligence seemed right. Whitman was not damaged in the flurry. He went his way without resentment and was well taken care of by his unshakable equanimity. In fact, he was promptly put back into the government service, this time in the department of the Attorney General. Whitman took his reverses, as he always took his victories, with stoic benignity. He never ranted at fortune. He never thought too much or too little of his luck. He never expected men to do things that transcended their development. He never mushed over men who had got beyond their infirmities. It gives a touch of romance to this event with Harlan to be told that Whitman was contemporaneously working upon his Lincoln elegy, which, while not necessarily the greatest poem of its character of that war or in literature, has come to invite the most general concessions.

In dealing with Harlan we must not forget that Whitman had created a state of war. Like Jesus, he came to bring not peace but a sword. That sword was the preliminary of a peace. But while it was a sword, before it was beaten into a ploughshare, it was double-edged and produced fratricidal results. Whitman invoked criticism against criticism. He divided the critical masters of the world. He set the teeth of the professorial classes on edge. All this not by treating his principles polemically, or as if waging

battle in the interest of some miniatured schism, but by the simplest truce of his Quaker spirit. It is not surprising that Harlan went astray in such an atmosphere. Abler men than Harlan did things as small and thought things as narrow. It is not necessary to enforce this statement by a tiresome citation of details. It is easy to forgive a mistake that has been historically refuted. We should rather welcome than resent the embattled bridges that Whitman had to cross. They left him confirmed by the final arbiters of worth.

In 1866 Whitman printed *Drum-Taps* with its sequel poems written during the war. This volume included *When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd,* and other pieces — ninety-six pages of matter in all. And in 1867 he succeeded in producing the fourth edition of the *Leaves,* now still further enlarged, in a bulky book of three hundred and thirty-eight pages. Here for the first time the poems begin to take on the order and classification eventually settled upon by their author and found in his final editions. This year was also of note for having seen the issuance of *Walt Whitman as Poet and Person,* a biographical and philosophic statement of the case of the *Leaves* by John Burroughs, who was Whitman's fellow-clerk in Washington at the time, and who had the advantage in the project mentioned of Whitman's personal counsel and endorsement.

That Washington group was of unusual calibre. It included such characters as Burroughs, Stedman,

Trowbridge, Eldridge and O'Connor, whose ardent genius burned out in the fire of unaccomplished design, but whose intrepid adherence to Whitman in the thick of every fight will reflect upon him an unqualifiable distinction. Whitman fondly spoke of O'Connor's various eloquent deliverances on the *Leaves* as "integral to their final life." O'Connor wrote a story called *The Carpenter.* This carpenter was Whitman. It is a divine figure fixed in magnificent relief in a human background. An eminent American writer once said to one of us, referring to O'Connor: "There was a great story teller, a romanticist of positive genius, lost in a pamphleteer. It is a pity. It is a tragedy." To O'Connor himself this pity, this tragedy, was not apparent. And to the future, in which the fortunes of Whitman will be regarded as of classic consequence, this great apostle will not cut a sorry figure. We may reverently leave O'Connor to that renown. We have mentioned a few names. We might easily increase the list. But our motive is not to do more than collect the representative data. Whitman's life in Washington in the post-war period, even as far along as 1873, was in its essentials happy and in the real sense prosperous. Whitman himself had the sort of temperament which could extract all sorts of joys out of the smallest capital. He was not making money. But he was making friends. And his book was moving on towards that sort of recognition which would

assure it a perpetual suffrage. Had fame hurried to him it would also have hurried away. It came with leisurely delay, and no man was better satisfied than Whitman.

We could not pass by this decade without noting the entrance of Peter Doyle into Whitman's life. Doyle is often spoken of as Walt's "humble" friend. He was humble because he was a conductor. He was humble because he came out of Lee's army as he had gone into it, a private. But Whitman had no friend humbler than any other friend. His friends were all kings or all simply men together. No one of them was quoted high or low at the expense of some one else or alone. It is a mistake, then, to refer to Pete as humble unless you also include Walt in the same epithet. But at any rate Pete was now in Walt's life. How he was in that life is so well portrayed in the *Calamus* prose of this edition that no word added here could strengthen his case.

At the start Whitman seemed more popularly heard in England than in America. He had scattered, individual adherents here; but in England he had adherents in bulk. In 1868 William Michael Rossetti brought out the English volume of *Selections,* always since associated with his name. The correspondence leading up to this edition throws much light upon the peculiar perils with which Whitman's generalship had to cope. It cannot be detailed here. This same year Freiligrath reviewed the *Leaves*

memorably in a German periodical. In May, 1870, Anne Gilchrist's *A Woman's Estimate of Walt Whitman* appeared in Sidney Morse's *Radical.* This remarkable deliverance (the essence in text of a series of letters written by Mrs. Gilchrist to William Michael Rossetti) stirred up hornets' nests on both sides of the ocean and disturbed that ultra-good element of the opposition which looked upon Whitman as a satyr. In one of the few personal poems written by Whitman he refers to Anne Gilchrist as his "noblest woman friend." And while we do not regard the present as the time nor this page as the place to go into the details of such an episode, it may be said that the correspondence which for all the years of her life following was carried on between this woman and Whitman reveals on both sides the existence of a superterrestrial confidence and respect.

It would be gratuitous to repeat too generally the details of Whitman's concrete life. All such matter is accessible in the biographical work of Bucke, in Kennedy's *memorabilia,* and in the large mass of magazine matter which has rehearsed and catechised the man Whitman from wardrobe to soul more times and in more gradings of interpretation than accompany most literary pedigrees. And yet this recital cannot neglect data so important, even if its arraignment is secured at the expense of some repetition.

In 1871 Whitman read "After all, not to create only," in present editions the "Song of the Exposi-

tion," at the opening of the American Institute, New York. In the same year came the fifth edition of the *Leaves,* which included *Passage to India,* as well as *Drum-Taps, Marches Now the War is Over,* etc. So had the *Leaves* gradually grown from little to much, continuing its revelation of a life, and maintaining an unquenchable vigor to the very last, when the old man physically was a wreck. We may also note the appearance of a second edition of the Burroughs biography. Edward Dowden contemporaneously published *The Poetry of Democracy,* with Whitman as a central figure. In 1872 Whitman delivered *As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free* at the Dartmouth College commencement. We know the poem now as *Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood.* Whitman this year, to use his own note, "took a two months' trip through the New England States, up the Connecticut Valley, Vermont, the Adirondack region and to Burlington, Vt.," to see his "dear sister Hannah once more, returning had a pleasant day trip down Lake Champlain, and the next day down the Hudson." Three times in his life Whitman was brought to a sharp turn. To refer to them in the rough, these pivotal years were 1855, 1862, and 1873. In 1855 he launched *Leaves of Grass.* In 1862 he entered upon his war experiences. In 1873 came his paralysis and the era of his declining physical manhood. The shock of this year (1873), consequent upon the

sudden loss of his mother at Camden, N. J., left him sadly eclipsed. He never went back to Washington to live. From this date he remained a resident of Camden. Like the superficial accident that took him to the war, this later event pregnantly affected his future history.

It is quite natural for us to fall into the personal vein. It is not at the best intended that these notes should include more than the crucial underpinnings of biography. So much of Whitman's real biography is auto. You resort to his text anywhere, prose or verse, and you find the man. That is the sort of man we found, dropping in upon him and having him drop in upon us, in Camden, during our life there together through two decades. The mere dates which fix his poems into a calendar are, after all, of slight significance. It is for their spiritual sequence and periodicity that their author was most concerned. And no loyal historian would substitute a reduced standard.

Whitman had no experience of the hurrah which most men even of genius enjoy at one time or other, or, perhaps, on repeated occasions, in the course of their careers. He had no sort of popular vogue. The general public rarely went to him at first hand. They got him as he leaked to them through the meshes of a soiled, if not absolutely mendacious, interpretation. He blamed nobody for this. Nor do we. He never complained of the not

peculiar fortune which made him an unrecognized author. He could wait. And as he waited he saw the light slowly strengthen. He found himself becoming the companion of original and powerful personalities. Not necessarily the famous but necessarily the strong. And if he knew anything he knew that this was prophetic. The man who is able to convince the prophets of his own generation is certain of the future. But his main concern was not to be successful with critics but successful with himself. He preserved himself for his own uses to the end. It must not be supposed by those who have perhaps read too much about the virulent abuse to which he was for twenty-five years subjected that he travelled without a guard. As there was never a man more completely misunderstood and more violently denounced, so there was never a man more gallantly companioned. And if you will attend closely upon any bibliographical statement of his career, you will discover that he heard from the beginning, on both continents, a gradually increased chorus of staunch and virile amens. The gaps were only superficial. Though his reputation has always proceeded without a loyalty either of mass or class. He appeals in man to early causes and unsophisticated instincts. That is why he gets hold of those young in years before they have had a chance to go dry, and of those whose honor is always young, and of those who prolong into maturer life that distaste

for formal institutions which youth always manifests and insists upon, and which makes of one piece the essential scriptures of races in other ways perhaps variant and erratic.

Let us rehearse a few dates and names in order to get whole on the topography of Whitman. The year of his mother's death was the year of his paralysis. For the two years following — indeed, until somewhat along into 1876 — he was physically prostrated. This does not mean utter disablement, for Whitman was always at work. Then after 1876 he seemed in bodily ways somewhat retrieved. Yet he could never entirely or even substantially recover the lost ground. The paralysis continued until death. But for years he held it sternly at bay. Running along through the ensuing decade were everywhere signs of gratifying appreciation. Among notable tributes really cherished by Whitman himself, and frequently referred to by him in the presence of his companions, were a few to which we wish to recur. Arthur Clive, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1875), wrote of Whitman as "The Poet of Joy." In *Birds and Poets,* Burroughs (1877) treated of Whitman under a striking caption: "The Flight of the Eagle." In that same year J. B. Marvin discussed Whitman in an essay in the *Radical Review.* In the *New Quarterly Magazine* (1878) appeared Stevenson's now well-known "Gospel according to Walt Whitman." In *Papers for the Times* (1879)

were two studies—one by F. W. Walters and the other by H. J. Bathgate. *The Nineteenth Century* (1882) contained an able tribute to Whitman from S. C. Macaulay, and in the same year Rudolf Schmidt wrote of Whitman in the Danish. Edward Carpenter published *Towards Democracy* (1883). We find Whitman more and more gravely received and discussed. T. W. Rolleston wrote (1883): *Walt Whitman—Ein Vortrag.* In 1885 Robert Buchanan wrote of *Socrates in Camden,* and in 1886 Karl Knortz printed his *Walt Whitman—Ein Vortrag.* After these came the recognition of enfranchised characters everywhere—from Symonds, in an essay on *Democratic Art;* from Havelock Ellis, in *The New Spirit;* from Robert Ingersoll in *Liberty in Literature;* from Dr. John Johnston, in *Notes of a Visit to Walt Whitman;* from Gabriel Sarrazin, in *Poésie Anglaise.* These are but straws. But they represent the sort of acknowledgment that was accumulating.

Whitman was no more elated by success than depressed by failure. We have been near enough to him at all times to note the enduring quality of his repose. Yet he had the child's manner of being pleased. He took all praise as well as all blame roundly to heart. He was in correspondence with men and women internationally about his work and his life. He and Symonds, though they never met, sustained unbroken epistolary relations which on Symonds's side were deferential in the extreme.

Symonds addressed Whitman as "dear master," and Whitman could never quite accustom himself to it even when told that "master" was a word easier to use in England than here. During this period Dowden was writing him frequently. Tennyson was not lacking in friendliness. He wrote Whitman on a number of occasions with reservations enough but in a spirit of manly good-will. And Whitman was on his side just as courtly and restrained. Tennyson never knew just where to place Whitman. Bucke visited the English bard through the intercessory letter of Whitman, and on this occasion Tennyson showed plainly enough that he was much at sea. "Whitman," he said to Bucke, "is a great big something, I do not know what. But I honor him." But even this is farther along than either Whittier or Lowell on this side was willing to go, while Longfellow's manifested personal acknowledgment of Whitman was abstracted from any concessions to his literary merit.

While busily occupied with his friendships Whitman was always doing the editing necessary for new issues of his books. He succeeded in bringing out the Centennial Edition, which was in two volumes and was in some part the mechanical work of his own hands. Five years later came the seventh edition, from the press of J. R. Osgood & Co. Six months after the issue of this book the Osgoods were threatened with prosecution by a Massachu-

setts District Attorney — Oliver Stevens. By abandoning Whitman the publishers lost a golden opportunity of distinguishing themselves and selling a book. They lived to regret their timidity. The state never could have sustained the contention of its functionary. George William Curtis wrote O'Connor on this occasion that Whitman's case was the case of free authorship and that the sympathy of all authors, no matter what their critical opinion of his work, belonged to him in this crisis. Osgood himself at a later day frankly confessed his mistake. And this confession was supported after Whitman's death by Osgood's solicitous application to the executors to grant him the privilege of bringing out something, anything, of Whitman's, in England. At that time Osgood was in partnership with MacIlvaine in London. The correspondence between Whitman and the publishers attaching to this event appears in the miscellanies of this edition and was distinguished for the courtesy displayed on both sides. We never knew Whitman to alter the tone of his good-humored apologies for Osgood. O'Connor became vocal again and sang his clarion protests across the continent. He flayed Stevens and his apologists with what Philip Hale called "a mastery of scholarly and polished invective." The Whitman books were taken to Philadelphia and issued under the imprint of Rees, Welsh & Co., who were succeeded in business by David McKay. Whitman

prospered highly in the event. The sale of the books was amazingly accelerated. He saw his cause debated in every newspaper and in every avenue or settlement of opinion, radical and conservative, and was convinced that the agitation could not fail to affect his career. "If I have a cause this is bound to help me. If I have no cause this could not hurt me." And he knew that whether he had a cause or not mattered little since the principle involved was greater than any cause. Imperturbably he kept up his work. In 1882 he gathered together the prose material now constituting the bulk of *Specimen Days and Collect.* It was an arduous task, "half hated, half loved," he would say. He never liked editorial jobs. But he had stubbornness enough to take him cheerfully through them when they were inevitable. He felt that the prose recital would help his poetic fame. It might serve as a sort of vestibule to the temple. The book has never sold in any vehement degree. And yet it contains a Whitman which is raw product indispensable to the structure of *Leaves of Grass.*

Bucke's *Walt Whitman* appeared in 1883, and bore McKay's imprint. This biography has special value because of its authoritative origin. It was statistically and spiritually revised by Whitman from cover to cover. As far as it goes it is final. In 1888 *November Boughs,* a collection of later prose and verse, appeared. In 1889 a group of the poems translated

into the German by T. W. Rolleston and Karl Knortz was published in Zurich. Whitman succeeded at this time, in spite of painful and disabling illness, in bringing out a bulky autographical volume which he called his *Complete Poems and Prose.* This almost clumsy product had an original prologue and an epilogue, as well as a title-page reproduction of one of the so-called "Lear" pictures of Whitman. Otherwise the edition was but reprint. It was limited and is now off the market. In 1889 he published, in celebration of his seventieth anniversary, the limited, autographed, pocket-book edition of *Leaves of Grass,* in which are included *Sands at Seventy* and *A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads.* Two years later *Good-Bye My Fancy* was got out after great difficulties incident to Whitman's broken health. His physical defects had taken radical turns now for some years. But Whitman persevered without complaint. All the work of revision and editing done from 1887 on was accomplished by the co-operation of Traubel. Whitman was taken down with his last illness in December, 1891. But he had succeeded in getting his crowning wishes accomplished in the rounding out of *Leaves of Grass* with the *Good-Bye* poems. He devotedly adhered to his friends. In recognition of their loyalty he issued special editions of the *November Boughs* and *Good-Bye My Fancy* volumes — just a few hundred copies — which were not to be marketed. The wish came unduly late and was

only consummated by us after his death. In this same autumn he had a hundred copies of the now completed *Leaves* bound up in rough gray paper covers, yellow labelled, designing to distribute them in the wide circle of his coöperators. When he felt that his case was hopeless Whitman had Traubel despatch these books. As he was too weak to sign them, though he hoped against hope to be able to do so, they went out minus the grace of this last courtesy.

In the quick of this comment it would be impossible to do more than note the least transitory of the influences emanating from Whitman's career. The discussion did not stop with his death. Since the month of March, 1892, we have had lives or elaborate studies of Whitman from John Addington Symonds, William Clarke, Oscar Lovell Triggs, William Sloane Kennedy, John Burroughs, Thomas Donaldson, Edmund Holmes, besides countless appreciations, which have appeared in about every magazine and newspaper of repute on the two continents. Of new matter from Whitman, printed since his death, we may mention the *Calamus* and the *Wound Dresser* letters, the *Old Age Echoes* in *Leaves of Grass,* the *Notes and Fragments,* edited by Dr. Bucke, and the additions made in this collection. The executors published a formidable volume of memorabilia entitled *In Re Walt Whitman.* Horace Traubel edited *Good-Bye and Hail Walt Whitman* — a pamphlet

containing the addresses and readings given at the funeral. An edition of *Leaves of Grass* has been brought out in the Dutch *(Natur Leven)*, by Maurito Wagenvoort. Small, Maynard & Co., of Boston, succeeded David McKay in the formal publishing of Whitman. Their prose volume is printed from a new set of plates. In 1892 McKay added to the book the fresh prose which Whitman had used in *November Boughs* and *Good-Bye My Fancy*. Whitman is being ever more attentively read in continental Europe, especially in Germany, where during the last two or three years the reviews have seriously taken him up, and he has appeared as the central figure in several volumes discussing the literary movements of the New World. Italy has given us the first of Signor Janaccone's several volumes projected in study of the format of Whitman's verse and the relations of that verse to his philosophy. It must startle those who contend that Whitman is without form if not void to have his form discussed with such soundness and approval by a distinguished scholar.

It is not our motive to go far in a quotation of authorities for Whitman's fame. When he died there were many who smacked their lips with satisfaction and declared that he was dead indeed. But he has lived on with drastic persistency. Long before his death criticism was found coming his way. It did not come driving everything before it

or without questions. But it came. And its peculiar composition left nothing to be desired. Whitman could not have expected acceptance without making a struggle for it. Towards the end he was often found saying: "Well, boys, we may not have done much, but we have gained a foothold." It is hardly likely that he ever had any essential doubts. Once he remarked: "I always saw either entire success or utter failure. Sometimes things looked black and I saw only failure. But the air would clear, success would now emerge. I guess it will be success." He was a man to whom success could only come in one way. In his way. Anything less than this would not have been success.

It would be impossible to write of Whitman in this place without referring incidentally to the peculiar personal, almost domestic, nature of his fame. Whitman does not primarily appeal to the literary imagination. He does not first of all appeal to your brain or your wit. He goes into the deeper soil of your emotion. That is why Whitman and his readers realize a practical fraternity. That is why those who absolutely knew Whitman in the flesh had no real experience not realized as well by those who have known him by the books. We can in no other way account for the extraordinary nature of the regard professed by Whitman's friends. This went far to compensate Whitman for what might have seemed—though he never called it that—the

public neglect. Emerson's son has written of his father's greeting of Whitman as though Ralph Waldo immediately realized that he had been deceived. But there exists a letter from Emerson, written eight years later, which imparts no sign of such a revocation. Thoreau's opinion was always unequivocally expressed. Bronson Alcott called Whitman "the American Columbus." Stedman has clinched his own opinion of Whitman in the extraordinary Introduction to his *American Anthology*. And yet it may be easy to make too much of endorsements. It may not matter a great deal what was said of Whitman by recognized men and may matter a good deal what sort of root he was able to grow in the common soil. And his career will not go short or long because of its fitness to decorate a hall of fame, but by the amplitude of its spiritual resource. It may be said, in a general way, that the sort of men and women affected by Whitman, and moved by him to some measure of and often to extravagant acquiescence, is prophetic. No man in history whose work so poignantly affected the pioneer line of his generation ever missed historic immortality. Whitman's most powerful friends were apt to be the non-elect. They were often radical and unpopular. They were the here and there, the casual and incidental, the disciples of revolution. They were alarmists and disturbers. They were little inclined to build Whitman up or tear him down out of

respect for professional traditions. Now, it seems hardly fair to name the few of reputation and to forget the many who crowd obscurely the porches of his renown. We feel guilty in having departed so far from our rule as to have specified a single name. The circle described was extracontinental. Men and women of most diverse minds and interests find equally good reasons for writing Whitman: "You have my gospel." He touches archist and anarchist, individualist and socialist, rebel and loyalist, optimist and pessimist. This effect is not achieved because he has fooled anybody by duplicity or obscurity but because in him we really do reach the spiritual moment in which assent and dissent coalesce.

We have alluded to interpreters and interpretation. It is, of course, unnecessary to say that Whitman is not responsible for anything written about him. There is a Whitman Fellowship, which was formally created in 1894 and has held annual meetings since. This entirely innocent assembly is often spoken of as a cult. But as it is, as an organization, absolutely without opinion or doctrine it could not yield to that charge. We would feel here, as in the Fellowship, that we had violated the fundamentals of good taste to quote a line about Whitman, or to indite one, that should stand in place of his own work or be insisted upon as a necessary exegesis. We hope to pass on his injunction to "leave all free as I have left all free."

Our disjecta has brought us along to Camden, where Whitman spent the last nineteen years of his life. We have left out much that should have been included and included some things which may seem unimportant or infelicitous. But we have little inclination to attempt a rounded recitative and less to conform to any set of rules that is observed on such editorial occasions. But before we conclude we desire to set down some memoranda derived from our own personal intercourse with Whitman in the seasons of our rendezvous together in Camden. It may be explained at this juncture that although we had been assisted by Dr. Bucke in massing the data for these notes, the Doctor's sudden death before the actual composition had been undertaken threw upon the two remaining executors the entire literal responsibility for what is here set forth. That is, while Dr. Bucke had approved of the general scheme he had no lot in its embodiment. And as Dr. Bucke lived in Canada, and was only rarely in the States, what is to be subsequently said reminiscently and descriptively of Whitman must be attributed to his confrères.

Whitman for years resided with his brother George in Camden. He was particularly fond of George's wife and had a very wholesome respect for her worldly judgment. He named her finally as his executrix. He respected George's mechanical talents, but never looked to him for any literary sympathy,

From the marriage of George had come a boy who was named for Walt but who lived only a few years. Walt's family regarded him spiritually with mingled awe and distrust. He would say of George: "We have all brotherly feelings for each other. But George does not know me. Maybe I don't know George, either." And he also said on one other occasion: "*Leaves of Grass* might just as well never have been written, so far as George is concerned. I guess George would have preferred me in another occupation." Nothing need be superfluously added about Walt's life in this household. So far as we know it was serene, unruffled, and in the main lines satisfactory. Yet Walt was always looking forward to a "ranch" of his own. He was often found talking about it. So when the Massachusetts incident occurred Walt felt flush, and took its first returns, along with five hundred dollars borrowed from George Childs, and purchased the frame "shack," as he would call it, on Mickle Street, where he remained until his death. From this time he was better contented. He could do more or less as he pleased. Some of his discomforts were perhaps increased. But the practical consciousness of freedom at last secured more than compensated for the disadvantages of the move. He was not easily fixed into the domestic routine, and this abstraction, therefore, to a habitat of his own was of real significance. It is true he afterwards had a housekeeper. But the

house was never formally "kept." It always more or less kept itself. This had both good and bad results. But Whitman came and went as he pleased, dispensed the sort of hospitality he preferred, and tied himself down at no time to scheduled meals and the formulas of sleeping and waking. He lived in a certain sense lawlessly. In the years during which this arrangement continued he was fond of his horse and carriage (the gift of his friends), fond of walking, and fond, last of all, of being taken out-doors in his wheel-chair. He kept going beyond all prediction. He loafed in the streets and on the ferry-boats and took trips into the open country. He was occasionally called upon to lecture somewhere. He wrote. He never seemed to be doing anything and yet always got a good deal done. This must have been an old trick. For while every one writing of Whitman in earlier years described him as lethargic and unsystematic to the degree of laziness, we discovered by the voluminousness of his note-books and the vast body of his miscellaneous literary remains that he must have worked like a Trojan. This quietism was his norm. He could tell a good story. He was full of still humor. He was without wit or epigram. He had hauteur without quills. You could never get nearer than near. He never wholly unbosomed. He always kept ways open for retreat. He was not a frivolous talker. He was not given to quick reply. Everything he said impressed you as

having come out of matured reflection. In business transacted by us together he was always deliberate. If he was asked to decide a point for the printers or binders he would call for time. Leave it with him till evening. Let him browse with it overnight. But when finally he had decided and the decision proved to be a mistake he expressed no regrets. He was too wholesome to have remorses or despairs. Even on his deathbed he would laconically observe: "Death may be next door but we won't live with death in view." His temper was imperturbable. Traubel worked with him for six years daily and saw him profoundly aroused to anger but twice. Piques were impossible to him. No querulous humors afflicted the invariableness of his courtesy. In the days of his severest physical depression he remained sweet and without irritation. He was fond of saying good things about people. He got the better of all his enemies by treating them with the justice they refused him. He was at home where he was at home and he was at home where he was not at home. He could have given courts pointers on essential manners. And yet his range of behavior included the foot of the scale. Without being tough himself he could make the tough see that he asserted no priorities. He was not literary. He read books and wrote books and yet he never fell into biblical habits. You always got the human impression first. It is supposed by the guessers that Whitman was

not familiar with literary history. No man ever got more from books than Whitman. But he never assumed for books the precedence that belonged to life. He postponed all professional grandeurs to the inarticulate humanities of the average. He seemed to deport himself with the same humility before the simplest man and woman, as if saying: "After you."

For years Whitman spent his Sundays in Harned's home. This was neutral ground. Here the visitors would come to find him. Here he would open his heart freely. Nothing under sun or moon escaped his observation. He would talk philosophy, religion, poetry, science. He had no opinions that he was interested in hiding and no opinions that he would brag about. You were struck with the vastness of his information. And yet you found him always more ready with questions than declarations. He was far more willing to have you talk than to talk himself. If he discovered that you had a specialty he was sure to get round to it and humbly sit at your feet. He made no attempt to shine. He was a man of spontaneous good-will who gave to every occasion his prevalent humor. The Harneds did not find him an uncertain quantity, sometimes to be loved, sometimes to be feared. He was given to referring to Harned's house as his "other home." He was a deferential guest. He fell in rationally with the plans and circumstances of the house. He

liked to sit alone before the fire or at the window. He loved to have the children playing about even when he did not play with them. He was not disturbed by their noise. Often he would be asked to recite and would do so, but he refused to recite his own poems. "I know none of them." He was equable without compromise, compassionate without weakness. In the Harned household he became an inevitable figure. Yet he anticipated no dates. He came every week. He did not come because he had promised but because he loved to. "Every Sunday when I get up I say to myself: 'I guess I'll go to Tom's to-day.'" This resolution would come to him as freshly as if he had not said to Harned the day before: "I guess I'll be there." It is not hard to see the connection between such personal habits and the sort of scripture we discover in the *Leaves*. Whitman seemed always new—always just made. When he lay there dying he gave us the notion of a man about to make a fresh start. Life in him never looked despair or surrender. At Harned's he would discuss the last letter, the morning's paper, the new book, and, best of all, somebody up or down the street—some everyday man or woman who had broken a leg or had lost a baby or had a run of good luck or had got left in politics or trade. Elbowing on so many epochal days next a man of this stripe, Harned found himself enjoying a perpetual endowment.

Though the visits ceased the visitor has always remained.

Whitman was such a neighbor. He never took and never allowed the last familiarities. And yet every man felt himself full size in Whitman's presence. He did not make you think he was a man of genius and you were not. You suspected there was genius in the room but you wondered who had it. A great book expands you to its own size. A great man shares his level with you. You may be sure that if book or man makes you feel mean that book or that man has spoken only in temporal accents. Whitman was looked up in Camden by the so-called great and small of the world. He received them with equal courtesy and with the same reserves. His democracy always afforded the individual his escape. The individual was entitled to some primacy as against the crowd. But only enough. Not enough to make individual and crowd enemies. Whitman was apt to prefer the greatly simple to the simply great. He did not run after men of power or parties. He saw no tuft brilliant enough to excite his ardor. He saw no ignominy ignominious enough to disarm his faith. He had friends whom others among his friends shook their heads about. But with Whitman these friends were not to be saints or sinners — they were to be friends. In consorting with his neighbors he was charged with lacking discrimination. But to one who has got past man's crimes to man

discrimination would be of no use: there is nothing to prefer. He was unfailingly collected. We have seen him in trying and almost tragic situations absolutely aplomb. He was the coolest man in any crowd. In a case in which his horse was backing the carriage overboard, and in one instance of runaway, and in a railroad wreck, he kept his nerve. This triumphant manner carried him through the most difficult social passes. A woman who met him with some misgiving remarked: "He has wonderful manners—they are not formal and accustomed, but they are manners." He gave right and left. He served with money and served with service. He had poorer relations with whom he shared his little. He was loyal to the bone. He was loyal to family and friends. But, best of all, he was loyal to the crowd. For our primary debts are owed to the crowd. Whitman received praise with humility and blame with delight. But he always pursued his own desires. His birthdays were great occasions. It was in 1888 that the first of his birthdays was celebrated. This was an occasion arranged at Harned's home. No birthday since has been neglected. Its observance in 1889 was a big affair, requiring the largest hall in Camden. In 1890 Whitman was still able to be about, and met with us at Reisser's, in Philadelphia. This was the year Ingersoll got over and impromptued across the table to Whitman for fifty-five

minutes in a speech which Whitman thought the most consummate piece of oratory he had ever enjoyed. The next year was our last with Whitman. He was at that time home-tied. So we arranged to have the dinner in his house. Until the very moment we were doubtful whether he would even be able to get downstairs to join us. But he came, and we had a halcyon evening together. An account of this may be read in *Round Table with Walt Whitman,* which, Symonds wrote us from Switzerland, affected him "with a great solemnity and to tears." Whitman was never more royally simple, more proudly the democrat, than when detected thus in the bosom of his family — that family of comrades whose lives were so inextricably one with his own. The evening of the last meeting between Ingersoll and Whitman (1892) was a sad one. Walt never bettered from that attack. While Ingersoll was outwardly cheerful he realized that Whitman's stream of life ran low. But the two big men had their talk out and parted like lovers who were resigned to events. Ingersoll's practical generosity to Whitman had been unprecedented. Whitman spoke of Symonds and Ingersoll as his best victories — "Symonds one of the most scholarly, Ingersoll one of the most magnetically spontaneous men on the planet." But he never dwelt upon this as being final. To him only the general effect was final. He looked for native men and women with native moments to correlate the substance of the

Leaves. Some of his friends came to him, urging that Ingersoll and Bucke were extreme. How could the *Leaves* be made responsible for any extravagance? "They are men of first rank," he replied—"men of the first remove or no remove: and I love men of that sort." And he argued again: "What have I to do with men's ideas, good or bad?" And he would intimate that he was neither for nor against ideas but chiefly concerned about love. A woman at Harned's asked him: "What kind of love, Mr. Whitman?" and he replied: "Just love." We never discovered him in a mood to argue men good or bad. He finally deposited every man in forgiveness. Yet he was full of fire for the great ideas. He was capable of intensest emotion and of emotional expression rigorously prophetic. No man loved America better. And yet his America was not an affair of political hurrahs but of spiritual amens. His America was not built on geographical but on human lines. He lamented certain then recent tendencies: "They are momentary. They leave the real work undone. The real America is not to establish empires but to destroy them. Any America that stopt with America would be a story half told." In Harned's parlor he warmly declared to a group of arguers: "America is not railroads but men. No matter how good your railroads your men must be better. The chief thing is men. America is the influence that will make men possible. And

this America can be as active in soil not technically America's as in America itself." When Whitman said religion he meant all religions. When he said America he meant all races. And when he saw America expanding he did not see it going armed with gun and club. He was not a controversialist in these later years, yet he entertained convictions whose solemn utterance was pentecostal. He opposed all policies in state or social life which threatened to set the courts and customs against the people — which victimized the people to privilege and caste. He was in favor of intercontinental emigrations. Speaking of America he said: "Let them all come. We can digest them all." He was sometimes quoted as an enemy of churches. But one of the last things he said was this: "I am only opposed to churches because I am in favor of the church." Such reminiscent evidence, which could be indefinitely extended, shows how well sustained was his interest in contemporary life. He did not share in any scholarly antipathy to the newspaper. He looked to it for the "abstract and chronicle" of his time. Whitman was only physically a sick man. He did no sick thinking. He had no sick passions. One hour before he died he counted his own pulse and announced that he was about done for. He labored under no delusions. He practised no self-deception. He had none of the old-man querilities. The youth of this man's old age kept his thinking perennially in

seedtime. He died from the bottom up. His head was the last to go. Said the autopsist after his death: "He must have lived weeks by mere force of will." Knowing from nearby all the trying conditions of his last sickness, we marvelled that no extension of physical feebleness dimmed the lustre of his brain. In the three months from December 17, 1891, to March 26, 1892, he died a thousand deaths. It is a thing, however, that need not be dwelt upon. For most other men die plucky deaths, fighting to the last ditch. Whitman would say himself, referring to the boys in the hospitals: "They all died handsomely." He died handsomely.

Whitman died March 26, 1892. The last entry in his diary was this: "Dec. 2 x 4th x 2d, 3d day & night g't suffering."

Whitman's funeral was wholly without parallel in America. It is not difficult to create a furore over the remains of the generals and the statesmen, whose grandiose stature excites an immediate reward. It is far more difficult to gain the public eye or ear for an abstraction. And literary, philosophic, and religious effects are abstract. So that Whitman's appeal was to an element in the human psychus hard to reach and puzzling to hold. Yet the appeal was made and its success was eminent. While the outpouring was vast it seemed concerted. It resembled the flow and overflow of some irrevocable and inexplicable but archaically uncorrupted emotion. For hours,

while the body lay exposed in his home, a stream many thousands in number passed by, and was only finally cut off by a necessary time limit. From the Delaware ferries to Harleigh, a distance of perhaps three miles, the roads were busy with people coming and going, and with fakirs who sold fruits and a strange miscellany of wares. It was not so much the funeral as the merrymaking. It possessed the kaleidoscopic features of the country fair. The faces of the people were even glad faces. For while the people were not glad that Whitman was dead they were glad that he had lived. It may be that few of the strolling mourners knew more than vaguely why they had undertaken their errand. Some fundamental urge had swept them from their moorings into a current. Whitman had always been familiarly one of the people's own. He had gone among the people with their own manners and with their own sympathies and with their own entire unaffectedness. He had dedicated his full faith to the average service. These crowds showed some apprehension of that unequivocal award. For it was award. He had awarded his being to them. He had given all. Not an atom was left alien. If Whitman could have wished for any tribute it would have been the gift of the popular gladness. He had come among them strange and distrusted and had departed as one of conceded kin. Whitman did not like lachrymose funerals. The funeral was not a

march confessing defeat but a pilgrimage chanting victory. And it was in this, never in a dejected, spirit, that we assembled at Whitman's grave. We had desired to escape all attitudinizing. No rote of church, no chemistry of criticism, would have harmonized with a life so optimistically and so impulsively charged. The words addressed to Whitman's death by the several friends who were chosen to speak were, therefore, free of all amalgams on the one hand of ecclesiastical, and on the other of philosophic, despair. And the scripture of the occasion was drawn from all sources with relevant resolution.

Whitman often repeated an old remark of his own: "If I regret anything it is perhaps that I have not said enough for the criminals and the outcasts." When asked what he thought he had done by living he replied: "I think I have got a foothold on which honestly to die." Traubel, just a couple of days before Whitman's death, plied him in this way: "Your books are not the Walt Whitman who will die tomorrow. They are the Walt Whitman who will live eternally." To which Whitman himself added: "You are right—they are that or they are nothing; and they are by the same sign not the John Smith or any other fellow who will die but the John Smith who is doomed to go on eternally and live."

Leaves of Grass at Whitman's death had paid all its debts to criticism and wiped off most of its scores

with tradition. It had got away from the simply diatribal aspects of its controversies. Whitman was only modestly confident when he said: "We came to measure a few sights and sounds ourselves and I think our measurements will keep." It is often announced with a precipitate sniff of victory that though Whitman wrote for the people the people have refused to hear him. Even if that was wholly true it would not dispose of Whitman. The prophet's vogue does not chance at the first curbstone. In an unpublished letter we find Emerson referring to Whitman as "the people's darling and their champion." Whitman did not die feeling that he was understood, but he died confident that he was to be heard. He felt that his message was fundamental,—that its meanings came out of the deepest backgrounds of history: that it was, perhaps, so far the most pregnant revelation from the god in man to itself. This colossal supposition was relieved of all stain of egotism by Whitman's abstractions of its claims from his single personality. He delivered the message in his own name. But any other name would have served as well. He felt that gravitation was utilizing him. And while he was proud enough to make preposterous demands he was humble enough to dissipate these demands in a universal benefaction. He was not distressed because any present half democracies failed to connect with him. He saw democracies die in democracy. And he knew that, whatever happened to

democracies, democracy would know its own face in the glass.

RICHARD MAURICE BUCKE.
THOMAS B. HARNED.
HORACE L. TRAUBEL.

September 1, 1902.

Inscriptions

One's-Self I Sing.

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse
say the Form complete is worthier far,
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

As I Ponder'd in Silence.

As I ponder'd in silence,
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,
The genius of poets of old lands,
As to me directing like flame its eyes,

With finger pointing to many immortal songs,
And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said,
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,
The making of perfect soldiers.

Be it so, then I answer'd,
I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater one than any,
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,
(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,) the field the world,
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,
I above all promote brave soldiers.

In Cabin'd Ships at Sea.

In cabin'd ships at sea,
The boundless blue on every side expanding,
With whistling winds and music of the waves, the large imperious waves,
Or some lone bark buoy'd on the dense marine,
Where joyous full of faith, spreading white sails,
She cleaves the ether mid the sparkle and the foam of day, or under many a star at night,

Inscriptions

By sailors young and old haply will I, a reminiscence of the land,
be read,
In full rapport at last.

Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,
Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by them
be said,
*The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck beneath our
feet,*
We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,
*The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast suggestions of the
briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,*
*The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the melancholy
rhythm,*
The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all here,
And this is ocean's poem.

Then falter not O book, fulfil your destiny,
You not a reminiscence of the land alone,
You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether, purpos'd I know not
whither, yet ever full of faith,
Consort to every ship that sails, sail you !
Bear forth to them folded my love, (dear mariners, for you I fold
it here in every leaf;)
Speed on my book! spread your white sails my little bark athwart
the imperious waves,
Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me to every [sea,
This song for mariners and all their ships.

To Foreign Lands.

I HEARD that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle the New World,
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what you wanted.

To a Historian.

You who celebrate bygones,
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races, the life that has exhibited itself,
Who have treated of man as the creature of politics, aggregates, rulers and priests,
I, habitan of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in himself in his own rights,
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited itself, (the great pride of man in himself,)
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,
I project the history of the future.

To Thee Old Cause.

To thee old cause!
Thou peerless, passionate, good cause,
Thou stern, remorseless, sweet idea,
Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands,

Inscriptions

After a strange sad war, great war for thee,
(I think all war through time was really fought, and ever will be really fought, for thee,)
These chants for thee, the eternal march of thee.

(A war O soldiers not for itself alone,
Far, far more stood silently waiting behind, now to advance in this book.)

Thou orb of many orbs!
Thou seething principle! thou well-kept, latent germ! thou centre!
Around the idea of thee the war revolving,
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,
(With vast results to come for thrice a thousand years,)
These recitatives for thee,—my book and the war are one,
Merged in its spirit I and mine, as the contest hinged on thee,
As a wheel on its axis turns, this book unwitting to itself,
Around the idea of thee.

Eidólons.

I MET a seer,
Passing the hues and objects of the world,
The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,
To glean eidólons.

Put in thy chants said he,
No more the puzzling hour nor day, nor segments, parts, put in,
Put first before the rest as light for all and entrance-song of all,
That of eidólons.

Ever the dim beginning,
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle,
Ever the summit and the merge at last, (to surely start again,)
Eidólons! eidólons!

Ever the mutable,
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering,
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,
Issuing eidólons.

Lo, I or you,
Or woman, man, or state, known or unknown,
We seeming solid wealth, strength, beauty build,
But really build eidólons.

The ostent evanescent,
The substance of an artist's mood or savan's studies long,
Or warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,
To fashion his eidólon.

Of every human life,
(The units gather'd, posted, not a thought, emotion, deed, left out,)
The whole or large or small summ'd, added up,
In its eidólon.

The old, old urge,
Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo, newer, higher pinnacles,
From science and the modern still impell'd,
The old, old urge, eidólons.

Inscriptions

The present now and here,
America's busy, teeming, intricate whirl,
Of aggregate and segregate for only thence releasing,
To-day's eidólons.

These with the past,
Of vanish'd lands, of all the reigns of kings across the sea,
Old conquerors, old campaigns, old sailors' voyages,
Joining eidólons.

Densities, growth, façades,
Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees,
Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave,
Eidólons everlasting.

Exaltè, rapt, ecstatic,
The visible but their womb of birth,
Of orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape,
The mighty earth-eidólon.

All space, all time,
(The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns,
Swelling, collapsing, ending, serving their longer, shorter use,)
Fill'd with eidólons only.

The noiseless myriads,
The infinite oceans where the rivers empty,
The separate countless free identities, like eyesight,
The true realities, eidólons.

Not this the world,
Nor these the universes, they the universes,
Purport and end, ever the permanent life of life,
Eidólons, eidólons.

Beyond thy lectures learn'd professor,
Beyond thy telescope or spectroscope observer keen, beyond all his chemistry,
mathematics,
Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy, beyond the chemist with
The entities of entities, eidólons.

Unfix'd yet fix'd,
Ever shall be, ever have been and are,
Sweeping the present to the infinite future,
Eidólons, eidólons, eidólons.

The prophet and the bard,
Shall yet maintain themselves, in higher stages yet,
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret yet to them,
God and eidólons.

And thee my soul,
Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,
Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,
Thy mates, eidólons.

Thy body permanent,
The body lurking there within thy body,
The only purport of the form thou art, the real I myself,
An image, an eidólon.

Thy very songs not in thy songs,
No special strains to sing, none for itself,
But from the whole resulting, rising at last and floating,
A round full-orb'd eidólon.

For Him I Sing.

For him I sing,
I raise the present on the past,
(As some perennial tree out of its roots, the present on the past,)
With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal laws,
To make himself by them the law unto himself.

When I Read the Book.

When I read the book, the biography famous,
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's life?
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?
(As if any man really knew aught of my life, [real life,
When even I myself I often think know little or nothing of my
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and indirections
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

Beginning My Studies.

Beginning my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,

The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs.

Beginners.

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing at intervals,)
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,
How they inure to themselves as much as to any—what a paradox appears their age,
How people respond to them, yet know them not,
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great purchase.

To the States.

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the States, *Resist much, obey little,*
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth, ever afterward resumes its liberty.

Inscriptions

On Journeys through the States.

On journeys through the States we start,
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,)
We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves and passing on,
And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much as the seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town,
We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern States,
We confer on equal terms with each of the States,
We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women to hear,
We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, promulge the body and the soul,
Dwell a while and pass on, be copious, temperate, chaste, magnetic,
And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,
And may be just as much as the seasons.

To a Certain Cantatrice.

Here, take this gift,
I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,
One who should serve the good old cause, the great idea, the progress and freedom of the race,

Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel ;
But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you just as much as to any.

Me Imperturbe.

Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of irrational things,
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less important than I thought,
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or the Tennessee, or far north or inland,
A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of these States or of the coast, or the lakes or Kanada,
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for contingencies,
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the trees and animals do.

Savantism.

Thither as I look I see each result and glory retracing itself and nestling close, always obligated,
Thither hours, months, years—thither trades, compacts, establishments, even the most minute,
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils, politics, persons, estates;

Thither we also, I with my leaves and songs, trustful, admirant,
As a father to his father going takes his children along with him.

The Ship Starting.

Lo, the unbounded sea,
On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails, carrying even her moonsails,
The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so stately—below emulous waves press forward,
They surround the ship with shining curving motions and foam.

I Hear America Singing.

I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,

Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

What Place is Besieged?

WHAT place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?
Lo, I send to that place a commander, swift, brave, immortal,
And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

Still though the One I Sing.

STILL though the one I sing,
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to Nationality,
I leave in him revolt, (O latent right of insurrection! O quenchless, indispensable fire!)

Shut Not Your Doors.

SHUT not your doors to me proud libraries,
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet needed most, I bring,
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the intellect,
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

Inscriptions

Poets to Come.

Poets to come ! orators, singers, musicians to come !
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than before known,
Arouse ! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping, turns a casual look upon you and then averts his face,
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,
Expecting the main things from you.

To You.

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to me ?
And why should I not speak to you ?

Thou Reader.

Thou reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,
Therefore for thee the following chants.

Starting from Paumanok

1

STARTING from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a miner in California,
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my drink from the spring,
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and happy,
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware of mighty Niagara,
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute and strong-breasted bull,
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars, rain, snow, my amaze,
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight of the mountain-hawk,

And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush from the swamp-cedars,
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.

How curious ! how real !
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,
The ancestor-continents away group'd together,
The present and future continents north and south, with the isthmus between.

See, vast trackless spaces,
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,
Countless masses debouch upon them,
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts, institutions, known.

See, projected through time,
For me an audience interminable.
With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,

Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,
One generation playing its part and passing on,
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its turn,
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to listen,
With eyes retrospective towards me.

3

Americanos ! conquerors ! marches humanitarian !
Foremost ! century marches ! Libertad ! masses !
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican [sea,
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota,
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant,
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North,
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own offspring,
Surround them East and West, for they would surround you,
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they connect lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times,
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

5

Dead poets, philosophs, priests,
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
Language-shapers on other shores,
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left wafted hither,
I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile among it,)
Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve more than it deserves,
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,
I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the flame of materials,
Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd,
The ever-tending, the finalè of visible forms,
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,
Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

6

The soul,
Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—longer than water ebbs and flows.

I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the most spiritual poems,
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my soul and of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may under any circumstances be subjected to another State,
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by night between all the States, and between any two of them,
And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of weapons with menacing points,
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces ;
And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,
Resolute warlike One including and over all,
(However high the head of any else that head is over all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,
I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute courteously every city large and small,
And employments ! I will put in my poems that with you is heroism upon land and sea,
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,
I will show what alone must finally compact these,
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love, indicating it in me,

I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were
threatening to consume me,
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires,
I will give them complete abandonment,
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,
For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,
I advance from the people in their own spirit,
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes! omnes! let others ignore what they may,
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is—and I
say there is in fact no evil,
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land or
to me, as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a religion,
I descend into the arena,
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the win-
ner's pealing shouts,
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above every
[thing.)

Each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's
sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States must be their religion,
Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

8

What are you doing young man?
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art, amours?
These ostensible realities, politics, points?
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the essential life of the earth,
Any more than such are to religion.

9

What do you seek so pensive and silent?
What do you need camerado?
Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen dear son—listen America, daughter or son,
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and yet it satisfies, it is great,

But there is something else very great, it makes the whole coincide,
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands sweeps and provides for all.

10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater religion,
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

My comrade !
For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one rising inclusive and more resplendent,
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of Religion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around me,
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that we know not of,
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to him,
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual world,
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities ! O divine average !
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or setting,
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them, and cheerfully pass them forward.

11

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her nest in the briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also,
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat and joyfully singing.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang for was not there only,
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by the echoes,
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

12

Democracy ! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and joyfully singing.

Ma femme ! for the brood beyond us and of us,
For those who belong here and those to come,
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols stronger and haughtier than have ever yet been heard upon earth.

Starting from Paumanok

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with kindred eyes, and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and goes forward and is not dropt by death ;
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will be the bard of personality,
And I will show of male and female that either is but the equal of the other,
And sexual organs and acts ! do you concentrate in me, for I am determin'd to tell you with courageous clear voice to prove you illustrious,
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present, and can be none in the future,
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd to beautiful results,
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death,
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events are compact,
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,

And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to all days,
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but has reference to the soul,
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find there is no one nor any particle of one but has reference to the soul.

13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances, beasts, the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners and pass to fitting spheres,
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to the moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression, the meaning, the main concern,
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's substance and life return in the body and the soul,
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern
and includes and is the soul;
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body, or
any part of it!

14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indicative hand?
Toward the male of the States, and toward the female of the
States,
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!
Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar, rice!
Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of the
apple and the grape!
Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land
of those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!
Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!
Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the
south-west Colorado winds!
Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!
Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!
Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of Vermont
and Connecticut!
Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!
Land of boatmen and sailors! fishermen's land!

Inextricable lands ! the clutch'd together ! the passionate ones !

The side by side ! the elder and younger brothers ! the bony-limb'd !

The great women's land ! the feminine ! the experienced sisters and the inexperienced sisters !

Far breath'd land ! Arctic braced ! Mexican breez'd ! the diverse ! the compact !

The Pennsylvanian ! the Virginian ! the double Carolinian !

O all and each well-loved by me ! my intrepid nations ! O I at any rate include you all with perfect love !

I cannot be discharged from you ! not from one any sooner than another !

O death ! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour with irrepressible love,

Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,

Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on Paumanok's sands,

Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling in every town,

Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,

Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,

Of and through the States as during life, each man and woman my neighbor,

The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to him and her,

The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with any of them,

Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my house of adobie,
Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in Maryland,
Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice welcome to me,
Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or the Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire State,
Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming every new brother,
Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour they unite with the old ones,
Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and equal, coming personally to you now,
Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me,
(I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to give myself really to you, but what of that?
Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,
Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the universe,
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.

16

On my way a moment I pause,
Here for you ! and here for America !
Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States I harbinge glad and sublime,
And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red aborigines.

The red aborigines,
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez, Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging the water and the land with names.

17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and audacious,
A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching,
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with new contests,
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and [arts.

These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no more but arise,
You oceans that have been calm within me ! how I feel you, fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and storms.

18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,

See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and landing,

See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut, the flat-boat, the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude fence, and the backwoods village,

See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my poems as upon their own shores,

See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild and tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless herds of buffalo feeding on short curly grass,

See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved streets, with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles, and commerce,

See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the electric telegraph stretching across the continent,

See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe reaching, pulses of Europe duly return'd,

See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs, panting, blowing the steam-whistle,

See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines—see, the numberless factories,

See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from among them superior judges, philosophs, Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses,

See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States, me well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,

Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints come at last.

19

O camerado close ! O you and me at last, and us two only.
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly !
O something ecstatic and undemonstrable ! O music wild !
O now I triumph — and you shall also ;
O hand in hand — O wholesome pleasure — O one more desirer and lover !
O to haste firm holding — to haste, haste on with me.

Song of Myself

1

I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,

I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.
The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd the earth much?
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Walt Whitman, 1855

From a steel engraving by Samuel Hollyer after the daguerreotype by
Gabriel Harrison

Walt Whitman, 1855

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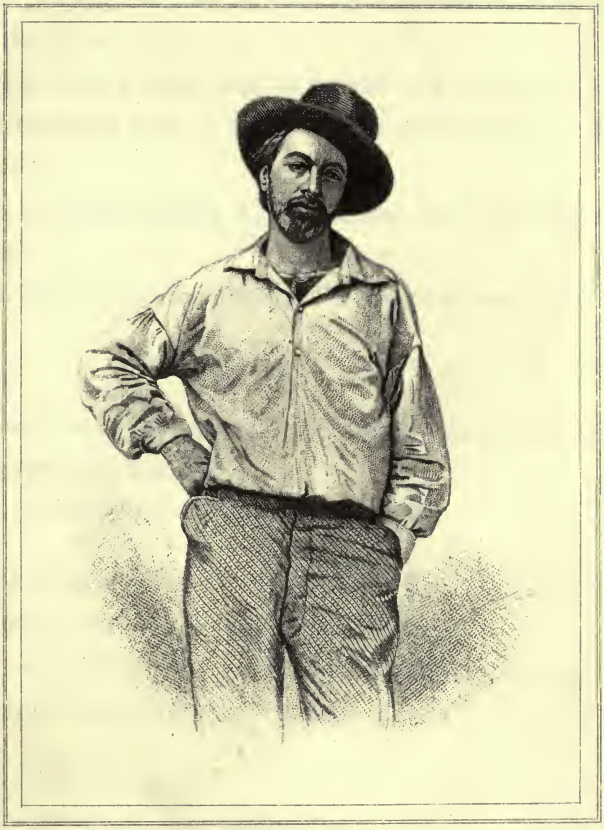

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin
of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are mil-
lions of suns left,)
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look
through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in
books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from
me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the be-
ginning and the end,
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance
and increase, always sex,
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed
of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing ;
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread,
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with their plenty,
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and city I live in, or the nation,
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and contenders,
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best,
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein and poke-weed.

6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe,
and am not contain'd between my hat and boots,
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good,
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and
fathomless as myself,
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and female,
For me those that have been boys and that love women,
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be
slighted,
For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the
mothers of mothers,
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be
shaken away.

8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies
with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders,
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his passage to the centre of the crowd,
The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and give birth to babes,
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls restrain'd by decorum,
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips,
I mind them or the show or resonance of them — I come and I [depart.

9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon,

The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged,
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by my [side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle and scud,
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a good time;
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west, the bride was a red girl,
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly smoking, they had moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets hanging from their shoulders,

On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins, his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held his bride by the hand,

She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,

I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,

Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,

And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,

And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruis'd feet,

And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,

And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,

And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;

He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north,

I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

II

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,

Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;

Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long hair,
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun, they do not ask who seizes fast to them,
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch,
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his knife at the stall in the market,
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms,
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so sure,
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags underneath on its tied-over chain,
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his hip-band,
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat away from his forehead,
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop there,
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as well as forward sluing,

To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object missing,
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade, what is that you express in your eyes?
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant and day-long ramble,
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not something else,
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills pretty well to me,
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,
Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an invitation,
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill, the chickadee, the prairie-dog,
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,

The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread wings,
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections,
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods,
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses,
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,
Scattering it freely forever.

15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,

The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe and looks at the oats and rye,
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bed-room;)
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manuscript;
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by the bar-room stove,
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass,
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do not know him;)
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his piece;
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee,
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them from his saddle,

The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners, the dancers bow to each other,

The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the musical rain,

The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,

The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins and bead-bags for sale,

The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent sideways,

As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the shore-going passengers,

The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots,

The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne her first child,

The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in the factory or mill,

The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,

The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,

The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,

The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,

The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails sparkle !)

The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent ;)
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,
(Miserable ! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you ;)
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the jingling of loose change,
The floor-men are laying the floor, the tinners are tinning the roof, the masons are calling for mortar,
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers ;
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is the fourth of Seventh-month, (what salutes of cannon and small arms !)

Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower mows, and the winter-grain falls in the ground;
Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the frozen surface,
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep with his axe,
Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or pecan-trees,
Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the Arkansas,
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Altamahaw,
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-grandsons around them,
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their day's sport,
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife;
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,

Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the stuff that is fine,
One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same and the largest the same,
A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant and hospitable down by the Oconee I live,
A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the limberest joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth,
A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-skin leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,
A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier, Badger, Buckeye;
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with fishermen off Newfoundland,
At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest and tacking,
At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine, or the Texan ranch,
Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Westerners, (loving their big proportions,)
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake hands and welcome to drink and meat,
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the thoughtfullest,
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist any thing better than my own diversity,
Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,
The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in their place,
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place.)

17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me,
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing,
If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing,
If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
This the common air that bathes the globe.

18

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd !
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea !
And to those themselves who sank in the sea !
And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known !

19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appointments with all,
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and odor of hair,
This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of yearning,
This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose ?
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish ?

Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering through the woods?
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,
That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and filth.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids, conformity goes to the fourth-remov'd,
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair, counsel'd with doctors and calculated close,
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

I know I am deathless,
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass,
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a burnt stick at night.

I know I am august,
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood,
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house by, after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,
If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself,
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or ten million years,
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,
I laugh at what you call dissolution,
And I know the amplitude of time.

21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one, and still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night—press close magnetic nourishing night!
Night of south winds—night of the large few stars!
Still nodding night—mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!

Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for my sake!
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love—therefore I to you give love!
O unspeakable passionate love.

22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,
We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of sight of the land,
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,
Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,
Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,
Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-ready graves,
Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,
I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of hate and conciliation,
Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each others' arms.

I am he attesting sympathy,
(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent,
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipodal side a balance,
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not such a wonder,
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or an infidel.

23

Endless unfolding of words of ages!
And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all,
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,
Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!
Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a grammar of the old cartouches,
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas,
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and this is a mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom and extrication,
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor men and women fully equipt,
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and them that plot and conspire.

24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart from them,
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and slaves,
Voices of the diseas'd and despairing and of thieves and dwarfs,
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and of the father-stuff,
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart,
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from,
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the spread of my own body, or any part of it,
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!
Firm masculine colter it shall be you!
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of my life!
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you!

Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be you!
Sun so generous it shall be you!
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall be you!
Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounger in my winding paths, it shall be you!
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever touch'd, it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious,
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of my faintest wish,
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of the friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really be,
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books.

To behold the day-break!
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently rising, freshly exuding,
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their junction,
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my head,
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master !

25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me,
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the day-break.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure itself,
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,
Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then ?

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articulation,
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are folded ?
Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,
The dirt receding before my prophetical screams,
I underlying causes to balance them at last,
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the meaning of all things,

Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out in search of this day.)

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what I really am,
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my face,
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

26

Now I will do nothing but listen,
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip of flames, clack of sticks cooking my meals,
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,
I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following,
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and night,
Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud laugh of work-people at their meals,
The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of the sick,
The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips pronouncing a death-sentence,

The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves, the refrain of the anchor-lifters,
The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of swift-streaking engines and hose-carts with premonitory tinkles and color'd lights,
The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of approaching cars,
The slow march play'd at the head of the association marching two and two,
(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped with black muslin.)

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's complaint,)
I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my ears,
It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,
Ah this indeed is music — this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them,
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent waves,
I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,

Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes
of death,
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,
And that we call Being.

27

To be in any form, what is that?
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,)
If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell
were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I can
stand.

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,
Treacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is hardly
different from myself,
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,

Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-fields,
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the edges of me,
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my anger,
Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

The sentries desert every other part of me,
They have left me helpless to a red marauder,
They all come to the headland to witness and assist against me.

I am given up by traitors,
I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am the greatest traitor,
I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight in its throat,
Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd touch!
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual loan,
Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and vital,
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

30

All truths wait in all things,
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,
The insignificant is as big to me as any,
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for each other,
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it becomes omnific,
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,

And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains, esculent roots,
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,
But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my approach,
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd bones,
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold shapes,
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great monsters lying low,
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in their possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop them ?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers,
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses,
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut, flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race around and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?
Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

33

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with lumbermen,
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet bed,
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and parsnips, crossing savannas, trailing in forests,
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new purchase,
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down the shallow river,
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead, where the buck turns furiously at the hunter,
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock, where the otter is feeding on fish,

Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou,
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail ;
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton plant, over the rice in its low moist field,
Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum and slender shoots from the gutters,
Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over the delicate blue-flower flax,
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer there with the rest,
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in the breeze ;
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on by low scragged limbs,
Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the leaves of the brush,
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the wheat-lot,
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the great gold-bug drops through the dark,
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and flows to the meadow,
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shuddering of their hides,
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons straddle the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons from the rafters ;

Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its cylinders,
Where the human heart beats with terrible throes under its ribs,
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it myself and looking composedly down,)
Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where the heat hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it,
Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of smoke,
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the water,
Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are corrupting below ;
Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the regiments,
Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my countenance,
Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood outside,
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good game of base-ball,
At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license, bull-dances, drinking, laughter,
At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash, sucking the juice through a straw,
At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I find,
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-raisings;

Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles, cackles, screams, weeps,

Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-stalks are scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits in the hovel,

Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the stud to the mare, where the cock is treading the hen,

Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with short jerks,

Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and lonesome prairie,

Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles far and near,

Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the long-lived swan is curving and winding,

Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she laughs her near-human laugh,

Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half hid by the high weeds,

Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground with their heads out,

Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,

Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled trees,

Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at night and feeds upon small crabs,

Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm noon,

Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree over the well,

Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired leaves,
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs,
Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon, through the office or public hall ;
Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign, pleas'd with the new and old,
Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,
Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and talks melodiously,
Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd church,
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist preacher, impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting ;
Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole forenoon, flatting the flesh of my nose on the thick plate glass,
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the clouds, or down a lane or along the beach,
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and I in the middle ;
Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy, (behind me he rides at the drape of the day,)
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals' feet, or the moccasin print,
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish patient,
Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with a candle ;
Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,

Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a long while,
Walking the old hills of Judæa with the beautiful gentle God by my side,
Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the stars,
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and the diameter of eighty thousand miles,
Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the rest,
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full mother in its belly,
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with a pike pointed staff, clinging to topples of brittle and blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,
I take my place late at night in the crow's nest,
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the wonderful beauty,
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the scenery is plain in all directions,
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out my fancies toward them,
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are soon to be engaged,
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass with still feet and caution,
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city,
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living cities of the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,
I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride myself,
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the stairs,
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,
The courage of present times and all times,
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the steam-ship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm,

How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was faithful of days and faithful of nights,
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, *Be of good cheer, we will not desert you;*
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days and would not give it up,
How he saved the drifting company at last,
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the side of their prepared graves,
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the sharp-lipp'd unshaved men;
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine,
I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry wood, her children gazing on,
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the fence, blowing, cover'd with sweat,
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the murderous buckshot and the bullets,
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the marksmen,
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze of my skin,
I fall on the weeds and stones,

Walt Whitman, 1849

This is the earliest portrait of Whitman

Walt Whitman, 1849

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The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head with whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself become the wounded person,
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,
Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my comrades,
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush is for my sake,
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads are bared of their fire-caps,
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am the clock myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,
The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,
Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable repairs,
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped explosion,
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously waves with his hand,
He gasps through the clot *Mind not me — mind — the entrenchments.*

34

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,
Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,)
'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve young men.

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their baggage for breastworks,
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemies, nine times their number, was the price they took in advance,
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,

They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and seal, gave up their arms and march'd back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in squads and massacred, it was beautiful early summer,
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and straight,
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead lay together,
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw them there,
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,
These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts of muskets,
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more came to release him,
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies ;
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men.

35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?
Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?
List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor told it to me.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,)
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer, and never was, and never will be;
Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon touch'd,
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water,
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the first fire, killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sundown, fighting at dark,
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on the gain, and five feet of water reported,
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the after-hold to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the sentinels,
They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire,
The other asks if we demand quarter?
If our colors are struck and the fighting done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain,
We have not struck, he composedly cries, *we have just begun our part of the fighting.*

Only three guns are in use,
One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's main-[mast,
Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry and clear his decks.

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery, especially the main-top,
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,
The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally thought we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,
He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

Toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they surrender to us.

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass to the one we have conquer'd,

The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders through
a countenance white as a sheet,
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and carefully
curl'd whiskers,
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft and
below,
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for duty,
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of flesh
upon the masts and spars,
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the soothe of
waves,
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong
scent,
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by
the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and
long, dull, tapering groan,
These so, these irretrievable.

37

You laggards there on guard ! look to your arms !
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd ! I am possess'd !
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,
See myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep watch,
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd to him and walk by his side,
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one with sweat on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and am tried and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie at the last gasp,
My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them,
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

38

Enough ! enough ! enough !
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back !
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers, dreams, gaping,
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults !
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the bludgeons and hammers !

That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion
and bloody crowning!

I remember now,
I resume the overstaid fraction,
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or to
any graves,
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an average
unending procession,
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of
years.

Eleves, I salute you! come forward!
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them,
stay with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass, uncomb'd head, laughter, and naivetè,
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and emanations,
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they fly out of the glance of his eyes.

40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,
Say, old top-knot, what do you want?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but cannot,
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights and days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and to spare,
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes,
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door,
Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,
O despairer, here is my neck,
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,
Not doubt, not disease shall dare to lay finger upon you,
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you
is so.

41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix engraved,
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and image,
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise and fly and sing for themselves,)
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself, bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see,
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves driving the mallet and chisel,
Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke or a hair on the back of my hand just as curious as any revelation;
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to me than the gods of the antique wars,
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their white foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple interceding for every person born,

Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty angels with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to come,
Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery ;
What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod about me, and not filling the square rod then,
The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,
Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,
The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to be one of the supremes,
The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good as the best, and be as prodigious ;
By my life-lumps ! becoming already a creator,
Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the shadows.

42

A call in the midst of the crowd,
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

Come my children,
Come my boys and girls, my women, household and intimates,
Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his prelude on the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords — I feel the thrum of your climax and close.

My head slues round on my neck,
Music rolls, but not from the organ,
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,
Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward sun, ever the air and the ceaseless tides,
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,
Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb, that breath of itches and thirsts,
Ever the vexer's *hoot! hoot!* till we find where the sly one hides and bring him forth,
Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally spooning,
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never once going,
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for payment receiving,
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets, newspapers, schools,
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories, stocks, stores, real estate and personal estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats,
I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or fleas,)
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and shallowest is deathless with me,
What I do and say the same waits for them,
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,
And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring ;
This printed and bound book — but the printer and the printing-office boy ?
The well-taken photographs — but your wife or friend close and solid in your arms ?
The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets — but the pluck of the captain and engineers ?
In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture — but the host and hostess, and the look out of their eyes ?
The sky up there — yet here or next door, or across the way ?
The saints and sages in history — but you yourself ?
Sermons, creeds, theology — but the fathomless human brain,
And what is reason ? and what is love ? and what is life ?

43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern,
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years,
Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the sun,
Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing with sticks in the circle of obis,
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the idols,
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession, rapt and austere in the woods a gymnosophist,
Drinking mead from the skull-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admirant, minding the Koran,
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and knife, beating the serpent-skin drum,
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified, knowing assuredly that he is divine,
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or sitting patiently in a pew,
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-like till my spirit arouses me,
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement and land,
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and talk like a man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, disheartened, atheistical,
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt, despair and unbelief.

How the flukes splash !
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts of blood !

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,
I take my place among you as much as among any,
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all, precisely the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot fail.

Each who passes is considered, each who stops is considered, not a single one can it fail.

It cannot fail the young man who died and was buried,
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then drew back and was never seen again,
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it with bitterness worse than gall,

Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the bad disorder,
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish koboo call'd the ordure of humanity,
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to slip in,
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the earth,
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of myriads that inhabit them,
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,
I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and summers,
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my sister?
I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon me,

All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with lamentation,
(What have I to do with lamentation?)

I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of things to be.

My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps,
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,

Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.

My lovers suffocate me,
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at night,
Crying by day *Ahoy!* from the rocks of the river, swinging and chirping over my head,
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,
Lighting on every moment of my life,
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows after and out of itself,
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces, were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would not avail in the long run,
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do not hazard the span or make it impatient,
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there.

46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured and never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let us hasten forth,
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your hand on my hip,

And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded heaven,
And I said to my spirit *When we become the enfolders of those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we be fill'd and satisfied then?*
And my spirit said *No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond.*

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while dear son,
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,
But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I kiss you with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair.

47

I am the teacher of athletes,
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own,
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived power, but in his own right,
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel cuts,
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a skiff, to sing a song or play on the banjo,
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-pox over all latherers,
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time while I wait for a boat,
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you,
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a house,
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves a key,
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me with him all day,
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my voice,
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do not fail them,
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know me seek me.

My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in his blanket,
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his wagon,
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,

The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them.

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud,
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning of all times,
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero,
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not offend me,
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and promotions,
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk—toss on the black stems that decay in the muck,
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small.

50

There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal life—it is Happiness.

51

The past and present wilt — I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?
Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

Song of Myself

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

Children of Adam

To the Garden the World.

To the garden the world anew ascending,
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought me again,
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them, for reasons, most wondrous,
Existing I peer and penetrate still,
Content with the present, content with the past,
By my side or back of me Eve following,
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

From Pent-up Aching Rivers.

From pent-up aching rivers,
From that of myself without which I were nothing,
From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I stand sole among men,

Children of Adam

From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,
Singing the song of procreation,
Singing the need of superb children and therein superb grown people,
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,
Singing the bedfellow's song, (O resistless yearning!
O for any and each the body correlative attracting!
O for you whoever you are your correlative body! O it, more than all else, you delighting!)
From the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day,
From native moments, from bashful pains, singing them,
Seeking something yet unfound though I have diligently sought it many a long year,
Singing the true song of the soul fitful at random,
Renascent with grossest Nature or among animals,
Of that, of them and what goes with them my poems informing,
Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of birds,
Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves,
Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land, I them chanting,
The overture lightly sounding, the strain anticipating,
The welcome nearness, the sight of the perfect body,
The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless on his back lying and floating,
The female form approaching, I pensive, love-flesh tremulous aching,
The divine list for myself or you or for any one making,
The face, the limbs, the index from head to foot, and what it arouses,

The mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter abandonment,
(Hark close and still what I now whisper to you,
I love you, O you entirely possess me,
O that you and I escape from the rest and go utterly off, free and lawless,
Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not more lawless than we;)
The furious storm through me careering, I passionately trembling,
The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the woman that loves me and whom I love more than my life, that oath swearing,
(O I willingly stake all for you,
O let me be lost if it must be so!
O you and I! what is it to us what the rest do or think?
What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other and exhaust each other if it must be so;)
From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to,
The general commanding me, commanding all, from him permission taking,
From time the programme hastening, (I have loiter'd too long as it is,)
From sex, from the warp and from the woof,
From privacy, from frequent repinings alone,
From plenty of persons near and yet the right person not near,
From the soft sliding of hands over me and thrusting of fingers through my hair and beard,
From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom,

From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk, fainting with excess,
From what the divine husband knows, from the work of fatherhood,
From exultation, victory and relief, from the bedfellow's embrace in the night,
From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips and bosoms,
From the cling of the trembling arm,
From the bending curve and the clinch,
From side by side the pliant coverlet off-throwing,
From the one so unwilling to have me leave, and me just as unwilling to leave,
(Yet a moment O tender waiter, and I return,)
From the hour of shining stars and dropping dews,
From the night a moment I emerging flitting out,
Celebrate you act divine and you children prepared for,
And you stalwart loins.

I Sing the Body Electric.

I

I SING the body electric,
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves?

And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead?
And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?
And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the body itself balks account,
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is perfect.

The expression of the face balks account,
But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in his face,
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists,
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of his waist and knees, dress does not hide him,
The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the cotton and broadcloth,
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps more,
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of women, the folds of their dress, their style as we pass in the street, the contour of their shape downwards,
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims through the transparent green-shine, or lies with his face up and rolls silently to and fro in the heave of the water,

The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats, the horseman in his saddle,

Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,

The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,

The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in the garden or cow-yard,

The young fellow hoeing corn, the sleigh-driver driving his six horses through the crowd,

The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown, lusty, good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot at sundown after work,

The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and resistance,

The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumpled over and blinding the eyes ;

The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of masculine muscle through clean-setting trowsers and waist-straps,

The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,

The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the curv'd neck and the counting;

Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the mother's breast with the little child,

Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in line with the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

3

I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the fathers of sons.

This man was of wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person,
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his hair and beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes, the richness and breadth of his manners,
These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his sons were massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome,
They and his daughters loved him, all who saw him loved him,
They did not love him by allowance, they loved him with personal love,
He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet through the clear-brown skin of his face,
He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat himself, he had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner, he had fowling-pieces presented to him by men that loved him,
When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt or fish, you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous of the gang,
You would wish long and long to be with him, you would wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other.

4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing flesh is enough,
To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so lightly round his or her neck for a moment, what is this then?
I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases the soul well,
All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

5

This is the female form,
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapor, all falls aside but myself and it,
Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth, and what was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed,
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the response likewise ungovernable,
Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands all diffused, mine too diffused,
Ebb stung by the flow and flow stung by the ebb, love-flesh swelling and deliciously aching,

Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice,
Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the prostrate dawn,
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, man is born of woman,
This the bath of birth, this the merge of small and large, and the outlet again.

Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the rest, and is the exit of the rest,
You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,
She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,
She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and active,
She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as well as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,
As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible completeness, sanity, beauty,
See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the Female I see.

6

The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his place,
He too is all qualities, he is action and power,

The flush of the known universe is in him,
Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become him well,
The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow that is utmost become him well, pride is for him,
The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to the soul,
Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings every thing to the test of himself,
Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail he strikes soundings at last only here,
(Where else does he strike soundings except here?)

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred,
No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in the laborers' gang?
Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the wharf?
Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the well-off, just as much as you,
Each has his or her place in the procession.

(All is a procession,
The universe is a procession with measured and perfect motion.)

Do you know so much yourself that you call the meanest ignorant?
Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or she has no right to a sight?

Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse float,
and the soil is on the surface, and water runs and vegetation sprouts,
For you only, and not for him and her?

7

A man's body at auction,
(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and watch the sale,)
I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough for it,
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years without one animal or plant,
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,
In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning in tendon and nerve,
They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby, good-sized arms and legs,
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,
The same old blood! the same red-running blood!
There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires, reachings, aspirations,
(Do you think they are not there because they are not express'd in parlors and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall be fathers in their turns,
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his offspring through the centuries?
(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could trace back through the centuries?)

8

A woman's body at auction,
She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of mothers,
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?
Have you ever loved the body of a man?
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in all nations and times all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted,
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or the fool that corrupted her own live body?
For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves.

9

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men and women, nor the likes of the parts of you,
I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the likes of the soul, (and that they are the soul,)
I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my poems, and that they are my poems,
Man's, woman's, child's, youth's, wife's, husband's, mother's, father's, young man's, young woman's poems,
Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,
Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eyebrows, and the waking or sleeping of the lids,
Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and the jaw-hinges,
Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,
Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck, neck-[slue,
Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and the ample side-round of the chest,

Upper-arm, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews, arm-bones,
Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, forefinger, finger-joints, finger-nails,
Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone, breast-side,
Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,
Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round, man-balls, man-root,
Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,
Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,
Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel ;
All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of my or your body or of any one's body, male or female,
The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and clean,
The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality, maternity,
Womanhood and all that is a woman, and the man that comes from woman,
The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter, weeping, love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,
The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting aloud,
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking, swimming,
Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-curving and tightening,
The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around the eyes,
The skin, the sunburnt shade, freckles, hair,

The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the hand the naked meat of the body,
The circling rivers the breath, and breathing it in and out,
The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence downward toward the knees,
The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and the marrow in the bones,
The exquisite realization of health ;
O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul,
O I say now these are the soul !

A Woman Waits for Me.

A WOMAN waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results, promulgations,
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the seminal milk,
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions, loves, beauties, delights of the earth,
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the earth,
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and justifications of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness
of his sex,
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those women
that are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust husband
of those women.

They are not one jot less than I am.
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing winds,
Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run, strike,
retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear, well-
possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own sake, but
for others' sakes,
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,

I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States, I press with slow rude muscle,
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long accumulated within me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and America,
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic girls, new artists, musicians, and singers,
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their turn,
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-spendings,
I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and you interpenetrate now,
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them, as I count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death, immortality, I plant so lovingly now.

Spontaneous Me.

SPONTANEOUS me, Nature,
The loving day, the mounting sun, the friend I am happy with,
The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder,
The hillside whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,
The same late in autumn, the hues of red, yellow, drab, purple, and light and dark green,

The rich coverlet of the grass, animals and birds, the private untrimm'd bank, the primitive apples, the pebble-stones,
Beautiful dripping fragments, the negligent list of one after another as I happen to call them to me or think of them,
The real poems, (what we call poems being merely pictures,)
The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,
This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and that all men carry,
(Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like me, are our lusty lurking masculine poems,)
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-climbers, and the climbing sap,
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love, breasts of love, bellies press'd and glued together with love,
Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love,
The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the body of the man, the body of the earth,
Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,
The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and down, that gripes the full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her with amorous firm legs, takes his will of her, and holds himself tremulous and tight till he is satisfied;
The wet of woods through the early hours,
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep, one with an arm slanting down across and below the waist of the other,
The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-plant, mint, birch-bark,

The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to me what he was dreaming,

The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl and falling still and content to the ground,

The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects, sting me with,

The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever can any one,

The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only privileged feelers may be intimate where they are,

The curious roamer the hand roaming all over the body, the bashful withdrawing of flesh where the fingers soothingly pause and edge themselves,

The limpid liquid within the young man,

The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painful,

The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest,

The like of the same I feel, the like of the same in others,

The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young woman that flushes and flushes,

The young man that wakes deep at night, the hot hand seeking to repress what would master him,

The mystic amorous night, the strange half-welcome pangs, visions, sweats,

The pulse pounding through palms and trembling encircling fingers, the young man all color'd, red, ashamed, angry ;

The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie willing and naked,

The merriment of the twin babies that crawl over the grass in the sun, the mother never turning her vigilant eyes from them,

The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or ripen'd
long-round walnuts,
The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,
The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find myself
indecent, while birds and animals never once skulk or find
themselves indecent,
The great chastity of paternity, to match the great chastity of
maternity,
The oath of procreation I have sworn, my Adamic and fresh
daughters,
The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw, till I
saturate what shall produce boys to fill my place when I
am through,
The wholesome relief, repose, content,
And this bunch pluck'd at random from myself,
It has done its work—I toss it carelessly to fall where it may.

One Hour to Madness and Joy.

One hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!
(What is this that frees me so in storms?
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)

O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!
O savage and tender achings! (I bequeath them to you, my
children,
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be yielded to me in defiance of the world !
O to return to Paradise ! O bashful and feminine !
O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the lips of a determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark pool, all untied and illumin'd !
O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at last !
To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I from mine and you from yours !
To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best of Nature!
To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth !
To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient as I am.

O something unprov'd ! something in a trance !
To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds !
To drive free ! to love free ! to dash reckless and dangerous !
To court destruction with taunts, with invitations !
To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me !
To rise thither with my inebriate soul !
To be lost if it must be so !
To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom !
With one brief hour of madness and joy.

Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd.

Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,
Whispering *I love you, before long I die,*
I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you to touch you,
For I could not die till I once look'd on you,
For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,
Return in peace to the ocean my love,
I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much separated,
Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,
As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us diverse forever;
Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air, the ocean and the land,
Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.

Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals.

Ages and ages returning at intervals,
Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,
Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins, perfectly sweet,
I, chanter of Adamic songs,
Through the new garden the West, the great cities calling,
Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering these, offering myself,
Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,
Offspring of my loins.

We Two, How Long We were Fool'd.

We two, how long we were fool'd,
Now transmuted, we swiftly escape as Nature escapes,
We are Nature, long have we been absent, but now we return,
We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,
We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side,
We browse, we are two among the wild herds spontaneous as any,
We are two fishes swimming in the sea together,
We are what locust blossoms are, we drop scent around lanes mornings and evenings,
We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables, minerals,
We are two predatory hawks, we soar above and look down,
We are two resplendent suns, we it is who balance ourselves orbic and stellar, we are as two comets,
We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods, we spring on prey,
We are two clouds forenoons and afternoons driving overhead,
We are seas mingling, we are two of those cheerful waves rolling over each other and interwetting each other,
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive, pervious, impervious,
We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and influence of the globe,
[two,
We have circled and circled till we have arrived home again, we
We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

O Hymen! O Hymenee!

O HYMEN! O hymenee! why do you tantalize me thus?
O why sting me for a swift moment only?
Why can you not continue? O why do you now cease?
Is it because if you continued beyond the swift moment you would soon certainly kill me?

I Am He That Aches with Love.

I AM he that aches with amorous love;
Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter, aching, attract all matter?
So the body of me to all I meet or know.

Native Moments.

NATIVE moments — when you come upon me — ah you are here now,
Give me now libidinous joys only,
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and rank,
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the midnight orgies of young men,
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some low person for my dearest friend,

He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one condemned by others for deeds done,
I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself from my companions?
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

Once I Pass'd through a Populous City.

Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions,
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me,
Day by day and night by night we were together—all else has long been forgotten by me,
I remember I say only that woman who passionately clung to me,
Again we wander, we love, we separate again,
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.

I heard you Solemn-sweet Pipes of the Organ.

I heard you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday morn I pass'd the church,

Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard your
long-stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,
I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I heard the
soprano in the midst of the quartet singing ;
Heart of my love ! you too I heard murmuring low through one
of the wrists around my head,
Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells last
night under my ear.

Facing West from California's Shores.

Facing west from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity,
the land of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost
circled;
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of Kash-
mere,
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the
hero,
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice
islands,
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having wander'd,
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,
(But where is what I started for so long ago ?
And why is it yet unfound ?)

As Adam Early in the Morning.

As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.

Calamus

In Paths Untrodden.

In paths untrodden,
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures, profits, conformities,
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul, [soul,
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that my
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond as I would not dare elsewhere,) [all the rest,
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet contains
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,
Projecting them along that substantial life,
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first year,
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,
To tell the secret of my nights and days,
To celebrate the need of comrades.

Scented Herbage of My Breast.

SCENTED herbage of my breast,
Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best afterwards,
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above death,
Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze you delicate leaves,
Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you retired you shall emerge again ;
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you or inhale your faint odor, but I believe a few will ;
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to tell in your own way of the heart that is under you,
O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves, you are not happiness,
You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting me,
Yet you are beautiful to me you faint-tinged roots, you make me think of death,
Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful except death and love?)
O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of lovers, I think it must be for death,
[of lovers,
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the atmosphere
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,
(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death most,)
Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as you mean,
[breast!
Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of my
Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!

Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid leaves !
Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast !
Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I
have long enough stifled and choked ; [not,
Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve me
I will say what I have to say by itself,
I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again utter a
call only their call,
I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the States,
I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape and
will through the States,
Through me shall the words be said to make death exhilarating,
Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with it,
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above all,
and are folded inseparably together, you love and death are,
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was call-
ing life,
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essential,
That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and
that they are mainly for you,
That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no matter
how long,
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appearance,
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so very
long,
But you will last very long.

Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand.

WHOEVER you are holding me now in hand,
Without one thing all will be useless,
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps destructive,
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to be your sole and exclusive standard,
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the lives around you would have to be abandon'd,
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any further, let go your hand from my shoulders,
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,
Or back of a rock in the open air,
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor in company,
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,)
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest any person for miles around approach unawares,
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea or some quiet island,
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,

With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's kiss,
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your hip,
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea ;
For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,
And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be carried eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,
For these leaves and me you will not understand,
They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I will certainly elude you,
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me, behold !
Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written this book,
Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,
Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly praise me,
Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very few) prove victorious,
Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much evil, [perhaps more,
For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times and not hit, that which I hinted at;
Therefore release me and depart on your way.

For You O Democracy.

COME, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

These I Singing in Spring.

THESE I singing in spring collect for lovers,
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)
Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass the gates,
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing not the wet,

Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones thrown there, pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the stones and partly cover them, beyond these I pass,)
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer, before I think where I go,
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in the silence,
Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me,
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace my arms or neck,
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker they come, a great crowd, and I in the middle,
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with them,
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever is near me,
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-oak in Florida as it hung trailing down,
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pond-side,
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns again never to separate from me,
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades, this calamus-root shall,
Interchange it youths with each other! let none render it back!)
And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and chestnut,

And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aromatic cedar,
These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,
Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely from me,
Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving something to each;
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I reserve,
I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am capable of loving.

Not Heaving from My Ribb'd Breast Only.

Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only,
Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,
Not in those long-drawn, ill-suppress sighs,
Not in many an oath and promise broken,
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition,
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,
Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,
Not in the curious systole and diastole within which will one day cease,
Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,
Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me when alone far in the wilds,
Not in husky pantings through clinch'd teeth,
Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words, echoes, dead words,
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,

Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every day,
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and dismiss you continually—not there,
Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness ! O pulse of my life!
Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in these songs.

Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances.

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills, shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-be these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known, [mock me !
(How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me and
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught of them,)
May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they indeed but seem) as from my present point of view, and might prove (as of course they would) nought of what they appear, or nought anyhow, from entirely changed points of view;
To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by my lovers, my dear friends,

When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am silent, I require nothing further,
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of identity beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

The Base of All Metaphysics.

And now gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base and finalè too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine having studied long,
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see

Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,
Of city for city and land for land.

Recorders Ages Hence.

Recorders ages hence,
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior, I will tell you what to say of me,
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover,
The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his lover was fondest,
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love within him, and freely pour'd it forth,
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear friends, his lovers,
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless and dissatisfied at night,
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he lov'd might secretly be indifferent to him,
Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in woods, on hills, he and another wandering hand in hand, they twain apart from other men,

Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his arm the shoulder of his friend, while the arm of his friend rested upon him also.

When I heard at the Close of the Day.

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd,

And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I was not happy,

But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,

When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning light,

When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,

And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way coming, O then I was happy,

O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,

And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came my friend,

And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continually up the shores,

I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whispering to congratulate me, [in the cool night,

For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover

In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast — and that night I was [happy.

Are You the New Person Drawn Toward Me?

ARE you the new person drawn toward me?
To begin with take warning, I am surely far different from what you suppose;
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?
Do you think it is so easy to have me become your lover?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd satisfaction?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real [heroic man?
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya, illusion?

Roots and Leaves Themselves Alone.

ROOTS and leaves themselves alone are these,
Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and pond-side,
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around tighter than vines,
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees as the sun is risen,

Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on the living sea, to you O sailors!

Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh to young persons wandering out in the fields when the winter breaks up,

Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,

Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,

If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open and bring form, color, perfume, to you,

If you become the aliment and the wet they will become flowers, fruits, tall branches and trees.

Not Heat Flames up and Consumes.

Not heat flames up and consumes,

Not sea-waves hurry in and out,

Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer, bears lightly along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,

Wafted, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;

Not these, O none of these more than the flames of me, consuming, burning for his love whom I love,

O none more than I hurrying in and out;

Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up? O [I the same,

O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting clouds, are borne through the open air,

Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,

Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you.

Trickle Drops.

Trickle drops! my blue veins leaving!
O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,
Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,
From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,
From my face, from my forehead and lips,
From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd, press forth red drops, confession drops,
Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I say, bloody drops,
Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,
Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,
Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding drops,
Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

City of Orgies.

City of orgies, walks and joys,
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one day make you illustrious,
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaus, your spectacles, repay me,
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at the [wharves,
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows with goods in them,
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the soiree or feast;

Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and swift
flash of eyes offering me love,
Offering response to my own—these repay me,
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

Behold this Swarthy Face.

Behold this swarthy face, these gray eyes,
This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,
My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm;
Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses me
lightly on the lips with robust love, [kiss in return,
And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck give a
We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,
We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing.

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of
dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself,
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone
there without its friend near, for I knew I could not,
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it,
and twined around it a little moss,

And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight in my room,
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana solitary in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,
I know very well I could not.

To a Stranger.

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you,
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me as of a dream,)
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate, chaste, matured,
You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not yours only nor left my body mine only,
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass, you take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,
I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit alone or wake at night alone,
I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful.

THIS moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,
It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning and thoughtful,
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Germany, Italy, France, Spain,
Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or Japan, talking other dialects,
And it seems to me if I could know those men I should become attached to them as I do to men in my own lands,
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.

I Hear It was Charged against Me.

I HEAR it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of these States inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or large that dents the water,
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

The Prairie-Grass Dividing.

THE prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,
Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom and command, leading not following,
Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and lusty flesh clear of taint,
Those that look carelessly in the face of Presidents and governors, as to say *Who are you?*
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd, never obedient,
Those of inland America.

When I Peruse the Conquer'd Fame.

WHEN I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the victories of mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in his great house,
But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was with [them,
How together through life, through dangers, odium, unchanging, long and long,
Through youth and through middle and old age, how unfaltering, how affectionate and faithful they were,
Then I am pensive—I hastily walk away fill'd with the bitterest [envy.

We Two Boys Together Clinging.

We two boys together clinging,
One the other never leaving,
Up and down the roads going, North and South excursions [making,
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving,
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering, thieving, threatening,
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water drinking,
on the turf or the sea-beach dancing, [chasing,
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness
Fulfilling our foray.

A Promise to California.

A promise to California,
Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget sound and [Oregon;
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you, to remain, to teach robust American love,
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among you, inland, and along the Western sea ;
For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea, and I [will also.

Here the Frailest Leaves of Me.

Here the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose them,
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

No Labor-Saving Machine.

No labor-saving machine,
Nor discovery have I made,
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest to found a hospital or library,
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,
Nor literary success nor intellect, nor book for the book-shelf,
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,
For comrades and lovers.

A Glimpse.

A GLIMPSE through an interstice caught,
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around the stove late of a winter night, and I unremark'd seated in a corner,
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently approaching and seating himself near, that he may hold me by the hand,
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of drinking and oath and smutty jest,
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking little, perhaps not a word.

A Leaf for Hand in Hand.

A LEAF for hand in hand;
You natural persons old and young!

You on the Mississippi and on all the branches and bayous of the Mississippi!
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!
You twain! and all processions moving along the streets!
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for you to walk hand in hand.

Earth, My Likeness.

EARTH, my likeness,
Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric there,
I now suspect that is not all;
I now suspect there is something fierce in you eligible to burst forth,
For an athlete is enamour'd of me, and I of him,
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in me eligible to burst forth,
I dare not tell it in words, not even in these songs.

I Dream'd in a Dream.

I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth,
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

What Think You I Take My Pen in Hand?

WHAT think you I take my pen in hand to record?
The battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass the offing to-day under full sail?
The splendors of the past day? or the splendor of the night that envelops me?
Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread around me?—no;
But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in the midst of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,
The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately kiss'd him,
While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.

To the East and to the West.

To the East and to the West,
To the man of the Seaside State and of Pennsylvania,
To the Kanadian of the north, to the Southerner I love,
These with perfect trust to depict you as myself, the germs are in all men,
I believe the main purport of these States is to found a superb friendship, exaltè, previously unknown,
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting, latent in all men.

Sometimes with One I Love.

SOMETIMES with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear I effuse
unreturn'd love,
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is certain one
way or another,
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not return'd,
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

To a Western Boy.

MANY things to absorb I teach to help you become eleve of mine;
Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,
If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not silently select
lovers,
Of what use is it that you seek to become eleve of mine?

Fast-Anchor'd Eternal O Love!

FAST-ANCHOR'D eternal O love! O woman I love!
O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought
of you!
Then separate, as disembodied or another born,
Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,
I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man,
O sharer of my roving life.

Among the Multitude.

Among the men and women the multitude,
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband, brother, child, any nearer than I am,
Some are baffled, but that one is not — that one knows me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,
I meant that you should discover me so by faint indirections,
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like in you.

O You Whom I Often and Silently Come.

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing within me.

That Shadow My Likeness.

That shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a livelihood, chattering, chaffering,
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it flits,
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;
But among my lovers and caroling these songs,
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

Full of Life Now.

Full of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and become your comrade ;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)

Salut au Monde!

1

O TAKE my hand Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you Walt Whitman?
What waves and soils exuding?
What climes? what persons and cities are here?
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?
Who are the girls? who are the married women?
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their arms about each other's necks?
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the mists?
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers?

2

Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east — America is provided for in the west,

Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends,
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting rings, it does not set for months,
Stretch'd in due time within me the midnight sun just rises above the horizon and sinks again,
Within me zones, seas, cataracts, forests, volcanoes, groups,
Malaysia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

3

What do you hear Walt Whitman?

I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife singing,
I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of animals early in the day,
I hear emulous shouts of Australians pursuing the wild horse,
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut shade, to the rebeck and guitar,
I hear continual echoes from the Thames,
I hear fierce French liberty songs,
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative of old poems,
I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and grass with the showers of their terrible clouds,
I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively falling on the breast of the black venerable vast mother the Nile,
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells of the mule,
I hear the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the mosque,

I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their churches, I hear the responsive base and soprano,

I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice putting to sea at Okotsk,

I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffle as the slaves march on, as the husky gangs pass on by twos and threes, fasten'd together with wrist-chains and ankle-chains,

I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,

I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong legends of the Romans,

I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the beautiful God the Christ,

I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil the loves, wars, adages, transmitted safely to this day from poets who wrote three thousand years ago.

4

What do you see Walt Whitman?

Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you?

I see a great round wonder rolling through space,

I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails, factories, palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of nomads upon the surface,

I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleeping, and the sunlit part on the other side,

I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,

I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them as my land is to me.

I see plenteous waters,
I see mountain peaks, I see the sierras of Andes where they range,
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays, Ghauts,
I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz, Kazbek, Bazardjusi,
I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps,
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians, and to the north the Dofrafields, and off at sea mount Hecla,
I see Vesuvius and Etna, the mountains of the Moon, and the Red mountains of Madagascar,
I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts,
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,
I see the superior oceans and the inferior ones, the Atlantic and Pacific, the sea of Mexico, the Brazilian sea, and the sea of Peru,
The waters of Hindustan, the China sea, and the gulf of Guinea,
The Japan waters, the beautiful bay of Nagasaki land-lock'd in its mountains,
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British shores, and the bay of Biscay,
The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to another of its islands,
The White sea, and the sea around Greenland.

I behold the mariners of the world,
Some are in storms, some in the night with the watch on the lookout,
Some drifting helplessly, some with contagious diseases.

I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in clusters in port, some on their voyages,
Some double the cape of Storms, some cape Verde, others capes Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore,
Others Dondra head, others pass the straits of Sunda, others cape Lopatka, others Behring's straits,
Others cape Horn, others sail the gulf of Mexico or along Cuba or Hayti, others Hudson's bay or Baffin's bay,
Others pass the straits of Dover, others enter the Wash, others the firth of Solway, others round cape Clear, others the Land's End,
Others traverse the Zuyder Zee or the Scheld,
Others as comers and goers at Gibraltar or the Dardanelles,
Others sternly push their way through the northern winter-packs,
Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena,
Others the Niger or the Congo, others the Indus, the Burampooter and Cambodia,
Others wait steam'd up ready to start in the ports of Australia,
Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon, Naples, Hamburg, Bremen, Bordeaux, the Hague, Copenhagen,
Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama.

5

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,
I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,
I see them in Asia and in Africa.

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses, gains, [passions, of my race.

I see the long river-stripes of the earth,
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,
I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the Yellow River, the Yiang-tse, and the Pearl,
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube, the Loire, the Rhone, and the Guadalquiver flow,
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian along the Po,
I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina bay.

6

I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and that of India,
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.

I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars in human forms,
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth, oracles, sacrifices, brahmins, sabians, llamas, monks, muftis, exhorters,
I see where druids walked the groves of Mona, I see the mistletoe and vervain,
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods, I see the [old signifiers.

I see Christ eating the bread of his last supper in the midst of youths and old persons,
I see where the strong divine young man the Hercules toil'd faithfully and long and then died,

I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd Bacchus,

I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown of feathers on his head,

I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-belov'd, saying to the people *Do not weep for me,*

This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my true country, I now go back there,

I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his turn.

7

I see the battle-fields of the earth, grass grows upon them and blossoms and corn,

I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.

I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the unknown events, heroes, records of the earth.

I see the places of the sagas,

I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,

I see granite bowlders and cliffs, I see green meadows and lakes,

I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors,

I see them raised high with stones by the marge of restless oceans, that the dead men's spirits when they wearied of their quiet graves might rise up through the mounds and gaze on the tossing billows, and be refresh'd by storms, immensity, liberty, action.

I see the steppes of Asia, [Baskirs,

I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of Kalmucks and

I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines, I see the jungles and deserts,
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tail'd sheep, the antelope, and the burrowing wolf.

I see the highlands of Abyssinia,
I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree, tamarind, date,
And see fields of teff-wheat and places of verdure and gold.

I see the Brazilian vaquero,
I see the Bolivian ascending mount Sorata,
I see the Wacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable rider of horses with his lasso on his arm,
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their hides.

8

I see the regions of snow and ice,
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn,
I see the seal-seeker in his boat poising his lance,
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge drawn by dogs,
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the south Pacific and the north Atlantic,
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland—I mark the long winters and the isolation.

9

I see the cities of the earth and make myself at random a part of them,

Salut au Monde!

I am a real Parisian,
I am a habitan of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin, Constantinople,
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels, Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward in Christiania or Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in some street in Iceland,
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

10

I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries,
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd splint, the fetich, and the obi.

I see African and Asiatic towns,
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Monrovia,
I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi, Calcutta, Tokio,
I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashanteeman in their huts,
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo, [Herat,
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva and those of
I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina and the intervening sands, I see the caravans toiling onward,
I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the pyramids and obelisks,
I look on chisell'd histories, records of conquering kings, dynasties, cut in slabs of sand-stone, or on granite-blocks,

I see at Memphis mummy-pits containing mummies embalm'd,
swathed in linen cloth, lying there many centuries,
I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the side-
drooping neck, the hands folded across the breast.

I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,
I see all the prisoners in the prisons,
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,
The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of the
earth,
The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere,
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophs,
I see the constructiveness of my race,
I see the results of the perseverance and industry of my race,
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among them, I
mix indiscriminately,
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

II

You whoever you are!
You daughter or son of England!
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you Russ in Russia!
You dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large, fine-
headed, nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on equal terms
with me!
You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Icelander! you Prussian!

Salut au Monde!

You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!
You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!
You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands! (you stock whence I myself have descended;)
You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian! farmer of Styria!
You neighbor of the Danube!
You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser! you working-woman too!
You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian! Saxon! Wallachian! Bulgarian!
You Roman! Neapolitan! you Greek!
You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!
You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or Caucasus!
You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares and stallions feeding!
You beautiful-bodied Persian at full speed in the saddle shooting arrows to the mark!
You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you Tartar of Tartary!
You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks!
You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk to stand once on Syrian ground!
You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!
You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream of the Euphrates! you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh! you ascending mount Ararat!
You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of the minarets of Mecca!

You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-mandeb ruling your families and tribes!

You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Nazareth, Damascus, or lake Tiberias!

You Thibet trader on the wide inland or bargaining in the shops of Lassa!

You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar, Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo!

All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, indifferent of place!

All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the sea!

And you of centuries hence when you listen to me!

And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but include just the same!

Health to you! good will to you all, from me and America sent!

Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon the [earth,
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

12

You Hottentot with clicking palate! you woolly-hair'd hordes!

You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!

You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes!

You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down upon for all your glimmering language and spirituality!

You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!
You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip, groveling, seeking your food!

You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!
You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee!
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!
You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you Feejeeman!
I do not prefer others so very much before you either,
I do not say one word against you, away back there where you stand,
(You will come forward in due time to my side.)

13

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the whole earth,
I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in all lands,
I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

You vapors, I think I have risen with you, moved away to distant continents, and fallen down there, for reasons,
I think I have blown with you you winds;
You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,
I have run through what any river or strait of the globe has run through,
I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas and on the high embedded rocks, to cry thence :

Salut au monde!

What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate those
cities myself,

All islands to which birds wing their way I wing my way myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,

I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,

To remain after me in sight forever,

For all the haunts and homes of men.

Song of the Open Road

I

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,
I do not want the constellations any nearer,
I know they are very well where they are,
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all
that is here,
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor denial,
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the il-
literate person, are not denied;
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp,
the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the
eloping couple,
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into
the town, the return back from the town,
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be interdicted,
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak! [shape!
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them
You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable
showers!
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear
to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined
sides! you distant ships!

You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!
You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!
You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to me,
From the living and the dead you have peopled your impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with me.

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
The picture alive, every part in its best light,
The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where it is not wanted,
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me *Do not leave me?*
Do you say *Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?*
Do you say *I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and undenied, adhere to me?*

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet I love you,
You express me better than I can express myself,
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all free poems also,
I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,
I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and whoever beholds me shall like me,
I think whoever I see must be happy.

5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
Listening to others, considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,
I can repeat over to men and women You have done such good to me I would do the same to you,
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,

Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me.

6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not amaze me,
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks all authority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it,
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content,
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of things;
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,

They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all under the spacious clouds and along the landscape and flowing currents.

Here is realization,
Here is a man tallied — he realizes here what he has in him,
The past, the future, majesty, love — if they are vacant of you, you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is apropos;
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,
The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd gates, ever provoking questions,
These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness why are they?
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me the sunlight expands my blood?
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and lank?
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and melodious thoughts descend upon me?

(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees and always drop fruit as I pass;)
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?
What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as I walk by and pause?
What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will? what gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness of man and woman,
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every day out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself.)
Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of the love of young and old,
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and attainments,
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

9

Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!
Traveling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is rude and incomprehensible at first,
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well envelop'd,
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this dwelling we cannot remain here,
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters we must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are permitted to receive it but a little while.

10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
We will sail pathless and wild seas,
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;
Allons! from all formules!
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage — the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!
He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance,
None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and health,
Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself,
Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd bodies,
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is permitted here.
(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,
We convince by our presence.)

II

Listen! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you :
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart,
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of those who remain behind you,
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer with passionate kisses of parting,
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands toward you.

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic men—
they are the greatest women,
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,
Habituès of many distant countries, habituès of far-distant
dwellings,
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary toilers,
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the
shore,
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of
children, bearers of children,
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down of
coffins,
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the curious
years each emerging from that which preceded it,
Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse phases,
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,
Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with their
bearded and well-grain'd manhood,
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or
womanhood,
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the
universe,
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they tend to,
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you, however long but it stretches and waits for you,
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,
To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all without labor or purchase, abstracting the feast yet not abstracting one particle of it,
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's elegant villa, and the chaste blessings of the well-married couple, and the fruits of orchards and flowers of gardens,
To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass through,
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever you go,
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you encounter them, to gather the love out of their hearts,
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you leave them behind you,
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was or is apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into niches and corners before the procession of souls along the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the grand roads of the universe, all other progress is the needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by men,
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where they go,
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something [great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house, though you built it, or though it has been built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and trimm'd faces,
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the confession,
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it goes,
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite and bland in the parlors,
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public assembly,
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the bedroom, everywhere,
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial flowers,
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of itself,
Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,
He going with me must go well arm'd,
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be not detain'd!
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen'd!
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain unearn'd!
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!
I give you my love more precious than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law;
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings, on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away,

The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore,
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd,
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried,
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air
floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left
the rest in strong shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the [south,
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of
my head in the sunlit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at
anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender
serpentine pennants,
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-
houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of
the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the
frolicsome crests and glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of
the granite storehouses by the docks,

On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,

On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and glaringly into the night,

Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow light over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,

I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river,

The men and women I saw were all near to me,

Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd forward to them,

(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it then between us?

What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not — distance avails not, and place avails not,

I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,

I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the waters around it,

I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me.

In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon me,

In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came upon me,
I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre?
Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me, [wanting,
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting,
Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,
Was call'd by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men as they saw me approaching or passing,
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their flesh against me as I sat,

Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly,
yet never told them a word,
Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing, sleeping,
Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,
The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as great as we like,
Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

7

Closer yet I approach you,
What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid in my stores in advance,
I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?
Who knows but I am enjoying this?
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm'd Manhattan?
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?

What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not accepted?

What the study could not teach — what the preaching could not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!

Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!

Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my nighest name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!

Play the old role, the role that is great or small according as one makes it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking upon you ;

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste with the hasting current ;

Fly on, sea-birds ! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air ;

Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till all downcast eyes have time to take it from you !

Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's head, in the sunlit water !

Come on, ships from the lower bay ! pass up or down, white-sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters !

Flaunt away, flags of all nations ! be duly lower'd at sunset !

Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys ! cast black shadows at nightfall ! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses !

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,

You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,

About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest aromas,

Thrive, cities — bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient rivers,

Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers,

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves
from us,
We use you, and do not cast you aside — we plant you perma-
nently within us,
We fathom you not — we love you — there is perfection in you
also,
You furnish your parts toward eternity,
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

Song of the Answerer

1

Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs of the Answerer,
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the sunshine before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his brother,
How shall the young man know the whether and when of his brother?
Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stand before the young man face to face, and take his right hand in my left hand and his left hand in my right hand,
And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer for him that answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is decisive and final,
Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as amid light,
Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Song of the Answerer

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape, people, animals,
The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet ocean, (so tell I my morning's romanza,)
All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever money will buy,
The best farms, others toiling and planting and he unavoidably reaps,
The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and building and he domiciles there,
Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are for him, the ships in the offing,
The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if they are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,
He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,
He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers and sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that the rest never shame them afterward, nor assume to command them.

He is the Answerer,
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be answer'd he shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,
(It is vain to skulk — do you hear that mocking and laughter? do you hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure, pride,
beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up and
down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go
freshly and gently and safely by day or by night,
He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the prying
of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more wel-
come or universal than he is,
The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and
tongue,
He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon men,
and any man translates, and any man translates himself also,
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner, he
sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike *How are you friend?* to the
President at his levee,
And he says *Good-day my brother,* to Cudge that hoes in the
sugar-field,
And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says to
another, *Here is our equal appearing and new.*

Walt Whitman, 1877

From a sketch by C. W. Waters. Owned by J. H. Johnston, Esq.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Walt Whitman, 1877

From a sketch by G. W. Waters. Owned by J. H. Johnston, Esq., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors that he has follow'd the sea,
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an artist,
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love them,
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it or has follow'd it,
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and near, removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims him,
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the Spaniard is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the Mississippi or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson or Paumanok sound, claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood,
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see themselves in the ways of him, he strangely transmutes them,
They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves they are so grown.

2

The indications and tally of time,
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophs,
Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant company of singers, and their words,
The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the light or dark, but the words of the maker of poems are the general light and dark,
The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of the human race.

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough, but rare has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the maker of poems, the Answerer,
(Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd such a day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have ostensible names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,
The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer, sweet-singer, night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer, weird-singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,
The words of true poems do not merely please,

Song of the Answerer

The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august masters of beauty;
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers and fathers,
The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health, rudeness of body, withdrawnness,
Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the words of [poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer,
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist, all these underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics, war, peace, behavior, histories, essays, daily life, and every thing else,
They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty, longing, fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet they are not the finish, but rather the outset,
They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and full,
Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of stars, to learn one of the meanings,
To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the ceaseless rings and never be quiet again.

Our Old Feuillage

Always our old feuillage!

Always Florida's green peninsula — always the priceless delta of Louisiana — always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas,

Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the silver mountains of New Mexico—always soft-breath'd Cuba,

Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea, inseparable with the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western seas,

The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three and a half millions of square miles,

The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the main, the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,

The seven millions of distinct families and the same number of dwellings—always these, and more, branching forth into numberless branches,

Always the free range and diversity—always the continent of Democracy;

Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers, Kanada, the snows;

Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt stringing the huge oval lakes;

Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing density there, the habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning invaders;

All sights, South, North, East—all deeds promiscuously done at all times,

[noticed,

All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads un-

Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering,

On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots, steamboats wooding up,

Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the valleys of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the Roanoke and Delaware,

In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the Adirondacks the hills, or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink,

In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock, sitting on the water rocking silently,

In farmers' barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labor done, they rest standing, they are too tired,

Afar on arctic ice the she-walrus lying drowsily while her cubs play around,

The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the farthest polar sea, ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,

White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest dashes,

On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike midnight together,

In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl of the wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow of the elk,

In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in summer visible through the clear waters, the great trout swimming,

In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large black buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,

Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines and cypresses growing out of the white sand that spreads far and flat,

Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants, parasites with color'd flowers and berries enveloping huge trees,

The waving drapery on the live-oak trailing long and low, noiselessly waved by the wind,

The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper-fires and the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,

Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses, feeding from troughs,

The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore-trees, the flames with the black smoke from the pitch-pine curling and rising ;

Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-fishery, the large sweep-seines, the windlasses on shore work'd by horses, the clearing, curing, and packing-houses ;

Deep in the forest in piney woods turpentine dropping from the incisions in the trees, there are the turpentine works,

There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground in all directions is cover'd with pine straw ;

In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings, at the forge, by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking,

In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence, joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse,

On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats under shelter of high banks,

Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or fiddle, others sit on the gunwale smoking and talking ;

Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing in the Great Dismal Swamp,

There are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plenteous moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree ;

Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company from an excursion returning home at evening, the musket-muzzles all bear bunches of flowers presented by women ;

Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen asleep, (how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)

The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes around ;

California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume, the stanch California friendship, the sweet air, the graves one in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-path ;

Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers driving mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales piled on banks and wharves ;

Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American Soul, with equal hemispheres, one Love, one Dilation or Pride ;

In arriere the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines, the calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and indorsement,

The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then toward the earth, [guttural exclamations,
The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and
The setting out of the war-party, the long and stealthy march,
The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and slaughter of enemies ;
All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these States, reminiscences, institutions,
All these States compact, every square mile of these States without excepting a particle ;
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields, Paumanok's fields,
Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies shuffling between each other, ascending high in the air,
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall traveler southward but returning northward early in the spring,
The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd of cows and shouting to them as they loiter to browse by the roadside,
The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, San Francisco,
The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan ;
Evening — me in my room — the setting sun,
The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing the swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the centre of the room, darting athwart, up and down, casting swift shadows in specks on the opposite wall where the shine is ; [listeners,
The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds of

Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness, the individuality of the States, each for itself—the money-makers,

Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass, lever, pulley, all certainties,

The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,

In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on the firm earth, the lands, my lands,

O lands! all so dear to me—what you are, (whatever it is,) I putting it at random in these songs, become a part of that, whatever it is,

Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping, with the myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,

Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansaw, the Rio Grande, the Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red River, the Saskatchawan or the Osage, I with the spring waters laughing and skipping and running,

Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I with parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek worms and aquatic plants,

Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from piercing the crow with its bill, for amusement—and I triumphantly twittering,

The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to refresh themselves, the body of the flock feed, the sentinels outside move around with erect heads watching, and are from time to time reliev'd by other sentinels—and I feeding and taking turns with the rest,

In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by hunters, rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging with his fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives—and I, plunging at the hunters, corner'd and desperate,

In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and the countless workmen working in the shops,

And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less in myself than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,

Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body no more inevitable united, part to part, and made out of a thousand diverse contributions one identity, any more than my lands are inevitably united and made ONE IDENTITY ;

Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral Plains,

Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war, good and evil—these me,

These affording, in all their particulars, the old feuillage to me and to America, how can I do less than pass the clew of the union of them, to afford the like to you ?

Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that you also be eligible as I am ?

How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to collect bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States ?

A Song of Joys

O TO make the most jubilant song!
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and balance of fishes!
O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like lightning!
It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive!
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-whistle, the laughing locomotive!
To push with resistless way and speed off in the distance.

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist fresh stillness of the woods,
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all through the [forenoon.

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the cool gurgling by the ears and hair.

O the fireman's joys!
I hear the alarm at dead of night,
I hear bells, shouts! I pass the crowd, I run!
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the arena in perfect condition, conscious of power, thirsting to meet his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the human soul is capable of generating and emitting in steady and limitless floods.

O the mother's joys!
The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the anguish, the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation,
The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of concord and harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,
To hear the birds sing once more,
To ramble about the house and barn and over the fields once more,
And through the orchard and along the old lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or along the coast,
To continue and be employ'd there all my life,
The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds exposed at low water,
The work of fishermen, the work of the eel-fisher and clam-fisher;
I come with my clam-rake and spade, I come with my eel-spear,
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam-diggers on the flats,
I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like a mettlesome young man;
In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel out on foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes in the ice,
Behold me well-clothed going gayly or returning in the afternoon, my brood of tough boys accompanying me,
My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be with no one else so well as they love to be with me,
By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift the lobster-pots where they are sunk with heavy stones, (I know the buoys,)
O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the water as I row just before sunrise toward the buoys,
I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green lobsters are desperate with their claws as I take them out, I insert wooden pegs in the joints of their pincers,
I go to all the places one after another, and then row back to the [shore,
There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters shall be boil'd till their color becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,
Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem to fill the water for miles;
Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake Bay, I one of the brown-faced crew;
Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand with braced body,
My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws far out the coils of slender rope,
In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty skiffs, my companions.

O boating on the rivers,
The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb scenery, the steamers,
The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional timber-raft and the raftsmen with long-reaching sweep-oars,
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when they cook supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread!
Something far away from a puny and pious life!
Something unproved! something in a trance!
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof, the ample and shadow'd space,
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

A Song of Joys

O to resume the joys of the soldier!
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—to feel his sympathy!
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays of his smile!
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the drums beat!
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of the bayonets and musket-barrels in the sun!
To see men fall and die and not complain!
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise again!
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic breezes fanning me,
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head, *There—she blows!*
Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we descend, wild with excitement,
I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey where he lies,
We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous mass, lethargic, basking,
I see the harpooner standing up, I see the weapon dart from his vigorous arm;
O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale, settling, running to windward, tows me,
Again I see him rise to breathe, we row close again,

I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd in the wound, [fast,
Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is leaving him
As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles narrower and narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I see him die,
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle, and then falls flat and still in the bloody foam.

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!
My children and grand-children, my white hair and beard,
My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch of my life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!
I am more than eighty years of age, I am the most venerable mother,
How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh to me!
What attractions are these beyond any before? what bloom more than the bloom of youth?
What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises out of me?

O the orator's joys!
To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice out from the ribs and throat,
To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,
To lead America—to quell America with a great tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving identity through materials and loving them, observing characters and absorbing them,

My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight, hearing, touch,
reason, articulation, comparison, memory, and the like,
The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my senses and
flesh,
My body done with materials, my sight done with my material eyes,
Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my material
eyes which finally see,
Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs, shouts,
embraces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys!
Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's, Iowan's, Kan-
sian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys!
To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,
To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,
To plough land in the spring for maize,
To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples in the fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along shore,
To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep, or race naked along the
shore.

O to realize space!
The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,
To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying
clouds, as one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant known
or unknown,

To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,
To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad chest,
To confront with your personality all the other personalities of the earth.

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth?
Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word and laughing face?
Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of the wide-breath'd games?
Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room and the dancers?
Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and drinking?

Yet O my soul supreme!
Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought?
Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender, gloomy heart?
Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the suffering and the struggle?
The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn musings day or night?
Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres Time and Space?
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine wife, the sweet, eternal, perfect comrade?
Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee O soul.

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,

No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful criticisms,
To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground, proving my interior soul impregnable,
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of death!
The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few moments, for reasons,
Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd, or render'd to powder, or buried,
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,
My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the purifications, further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

O to attract by more than attraction!
How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which obeys none of the rest,
It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies undaunted!
To be entirely alone with them, to find how much one can stand!
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to face!
To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of guns with perfect nonchalance!
To be indeed a God!

O to sail to sea in a ship!
To leave this steady unendurable land,

To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks and
the houses,
To leave you O you solid motionless land, and entering a ship,
To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on!
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,
A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun and air,)
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.

Song of the Broad-Axe

1

Weapon shapely, naked, wan,
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip only one,
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a little seed sown,
Resting the grass amid and upon,
To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine trades, sights and sounds,
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind,
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,
Welcome are lands of gold,
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those of the grape,

Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,
Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white potato and sweet potato,
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the teeming soil of orchards, flax, honey, hemp;
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands,
Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,
Lands of iron — lands of the make of the axe.

3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd for a garden,
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the storm is lull'd,
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,
The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their beam ends, and the cutting away of masts,
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses and [barns,
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture of men, families, goods,
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it, the outset anywhere,

The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa, Willamette,
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their clear untrimm'd faces,
The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on [themselves,
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the boundless impatience of restraint,
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random types, the solidification;
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard schooners and sloops, the raftsman, the pioneer,
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods, stripes of snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the natural life of the woods, the strong day's work,
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places, laying them regular,
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according as they were prepared,
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men, their curv'd limbs,
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on by posts and braces,

The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the bearers,
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end, carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from front to rear,
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the trowels striking the bricks,
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in its place, and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and the steady replenishing by the hod-men;
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-grown apprentices,
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping it toward the shape of a mast,
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the pine,
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers,
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy costumes,
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads, floats, stays against the sea;

Song of the Broad-Axe

The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in the close-pack'd square,
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble stepping and daring,
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling in line, the rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear of the hooks and ladders and their execution,
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through floors if the fire smoulders under them,
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and dense shadows ;
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after him,
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and temperer,
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and trying the edge with his thumb,
The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in the socket ;
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users also,
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,
The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of friend and foe thither,
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,

The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the truce and parley,
The sack of an old city in its time.
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and disorderly,
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of women in the gripe of brigands,
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old persons despairing,
The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,
The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,
The power of personality just or unjust.

4

Muscle and pluck forever!
What invigorates life invigorates death,
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much as the delicatesse of the earth and of man,
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?
Do you think a great city endures?
Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution? or the best built steamships?
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres of engineering, forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for them,
The show passes, all does well enough of course,
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely,
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-lifters of the departing,
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money is plentiest,
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards,
Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves them in return and understands them,
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds,
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,

Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons,
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,
Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority,
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President, Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay,
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on themselves,
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,
Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the men,
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same [as the men;
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,
There the great city stands.

6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a man's or woman's look!

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;
A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability of the uni- [verse,

When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,
The dispute on the soul stops,
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?
What is your respectability now?
What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-books, now?
Where are your jibes of being now?
Where are your cavils about the soul now?

7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the best for all the forbidding appearance,
There is the mine, there are the miners,
The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the hammers-men are at hand with their tongs and hammers,
What always served and always serves is at hand.

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long ere the Greek,
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindustanee,
Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those whose relics remain in Central America,
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn pillars and the druids,

Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-cover'd hills of Scandinavia,
Served those who time out of mind made on the granite walls rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean waves,
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the pastoral tribes and nomads,
Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of the Baltic,
Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men of Ethiopia,
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and the making of those for war,
Served all great works on land and all great works on the sea,
For the mediæval ages and before the mediæval ages,
Served not the living only then as now, but served the dead.

8

I see the European headsman,
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and strong naked arms,
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European headsman?
Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers, rejected kings,
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,
(Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,
Both blade and helve are clean,
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they clasp no more the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer any axe upon it,
I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own race, the newest, largest race.

9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,
They tumble forth, they rise and form,
Hut, tent, landing, survey,
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house, library,
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,
Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane, mallet, wedge, rounce,

Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what not,
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for the poor or sick,
Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure of all seas.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all that neighbors them,
Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot or Kennebec,
Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by the little lakes, or on the Columbia,
Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande, friendly gatherings, the characters and fun,
Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or down by the Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts and off coasts,
Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages through the ice.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders, [arches,
Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft, river craft,
Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western seas, and in many a bay and by-place,

The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hackmatack-roots for knees,
The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the workmen busy outside and inside,
The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise!
The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,
The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts of the bride's bed,
The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle,
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancers' feet,
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the friendly parents and children,
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man and woman, the roof over the well-married young man and woman,
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste husband, content after his day's work.

The shapes arise!
The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of him or her seated in the place,

The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-drinker and the old rum-drinker,
The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by sneaking foot-steps,
The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome couple,
The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings and [losings,
The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd arms,
The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,
The door passing the dissever'd friend flush'd and in haste,
The door that admits good news and bad news,
The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,
The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous absence, diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, without means.

II

Her shape arises,
She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross and soil'd,
She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd from her,

She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,
She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has no reason to fear and she does not fear,
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are idle to her as she passes,
She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend her,
She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she is strong,
She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than she is.

12

The main shapes arise!
Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.

Song of the Exposition

1

(Ah little recks the laborer,
How near his work is holding him to God.
The loving Laborer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,
To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious fire,
Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse, rehabilitate,
To obey as well as command, to follow more than to lead,
These also are the lessons of our New World;
While how little the New after all, how much the Old, Old [World!

Long and long has the grass been growing,
Long and long has the rain been falling,
Long has the globe been rolling round.

2

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Æneas', Odysseus' wanderings,

Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy
Parnassus,
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate and on
Mount Moriah,
The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish
castles, and Italian collections,
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried domain
awaits, demands you.

3

Responsive to our summons,
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,
She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,
I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,
Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames! can I believe then,
Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of them
retain her?
Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories, poems,
old associations, magnetize and hold on to her?
But that she's left them all—and here?

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see her,
The same undying soul of earth's, activity's, beauty's, heroism's
expression,

Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of her former themes,
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,
Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice by Castaly's fountain,
Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all those century-baffling tombs,
Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted warriors, ended the primitive call of the muses,
Calliope's call forever closed, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia dead,
Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the quest of the Holy Graal,
Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,
The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped with the sunrise,
Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne, Roland, Oliver gone,
Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk from its waters reflected,
Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot and Galahad, all gone, dissolv'd utterly like an exhalation;
Pass'd! pass'd! for us, forever pass'd, that once so mighty world, now void, inanimate, phantom world,
Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous legends, myths,
Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords and courtly dames,
Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown and armor on,
Blazon'd with Shakspere's purple page,
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious emigré,
(having it is true in her day, although the same, changed,
journey'd considerable,)
Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a path
for herself, striding through the confusion,
By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial fertilizers,
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,
She 's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

4

But hold — don't I forget my manners?
To introduce the stranger, (what else indeed do I live to chant
for?) to thee Columbia;
In liberty's name welcome immortal! clasp hands,
And ever henceforth sisters dear be both.

Fear not O Muse! truly new ways and days receive, surround
you,
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,
And yet the same old human race, the same within, without,
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings the
same,
The same old love, beauty and use the same.

5

We do not blame thee elder World, nor really separate ourselves
from thee.
(Would the son separate himself from the father?)

Looking back on thee, seeing thee to thy duties, grandeurs,
through past ages bending, building,
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,
Prouder than Milan's statued, spired cathedral,
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all,
Thy great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,
A keep for life for practical invention.

As in a waking vision,
E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy outside
and in,
Its manifold ensemble.

Around a palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron façades,
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfulest hues,
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner Freedom,
The banners of the States and flags of every land,
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards perfect
human life be started,
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Song of the Exposition

Not only all the world of works, trade, products,
But all the workmen of the world here to be represented.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,
In every state of practical, busy movement, the rills of civilization,
Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as if by magic,
The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,
Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread and cloth before you,
You shall see hands at work at all the old processes and all the new ones,
You shall see the various grains and how flour is made and then bread baked by the bakers,
You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada passing on and on till they become bullion,
You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what a composing-stick is,
You shall mark in amazement the Hoe press whirling its cylinders, shedding the printed leaves steady and fast,
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be created before you.

In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach you the infinite lessons of minerals,
In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be illustrated — in another animals, animal life and development.

One stately house shall be the music house,
Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall all be here,
None shall be slighted, none but shall here be honor'd, help'd, exampled.

6

(This, this and these, America, shall be *your* pyramids and obelisks,
Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,
Your temple at Olympia.)

The male and female many laboring not,
Shall ever here confront the laboring many,
With precious benefits to both, glory to all,
To thee America, and thee eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit powerful Matrons!
In your vast state vaster than all the old,
Echoed through long, long centuries to come,
To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,
Practical, peaceful life, the people's life, the People themselves,
Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

7

Away with themes of war! away with war itself!
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return that show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses!
That hell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or for lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,

And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,
Thy pennants labor, loosen'd to the breeze,
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear.

Away with old romance!
Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts,
Away with love-verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues, amours of idlers, [slide,
Fitted for only banquets of the night where dancers to late music
The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipations of the few,
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath the dazzling chandeliers.

To you ye reverent sane sisters,
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for art,
To exalt the present and the real,
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade,
To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are never to be baffled,
To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables, flowers,
For every man to see to it that he really do something, for every woman too;
To use the hammer and the saw, (rip, or cross-cut,)
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,
To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,
To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the washing, cooking, cleaning,
And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say I bring thee Muse to-day and here,
All occupations, duties broad and close,
Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,
The old, old practical burdens, interests, joys,
The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,
The house-comforts, the house itself and all its belongings,
Food and its preservation, chemistry applied to it,
Whatever forms the average, strong, complete, sweet-blooded
man or woman, the perfect longeve personality, [soul,
And helps its present life to health and happiness, and shapes its
For the eternal real life to come.

With latest connections, works, the inter-transportation of the
world,
Steam-power, the great express lines, gas, petroleum,
These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,
The Pacific railroad, the Suez canal, the Mont Cenis and Gothard
and Hoosac tunnels, the Brooklyn bridge,
This earth all spann'd with iron rails, with lines of steamships
threading every sea,
Our own rondure, the current globe I bring.

8

And thou America, [towering,
Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee above all
With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;
Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,
Thee, ever thee, I sing.

Song of the Exposition

Thou, also thou, a World,
With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different, distant,
Rounded by thee in one — one common orbic language,
One common indivisible destiny for All.

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe to those your ministers in earnest,
I here personify and call my themes, to make them pass before ye.

Behold, America! (and thou, ineffable guest and sister!)
For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands;
Behold! thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and mountains,
As in procession coming.

Behold, the sea itself,
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle the green and blue,
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of port,
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.

Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful axemen,
Wielding all day their axes.

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their wheels, thy oarsmen,
How the ash writhes under those muscular arms!

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths swinging their sledges,

Overhand so steady, overhand they turn and fall with joyous clank,
Like a tumult of laughter.

Mark the spirit of invention everywhere, thy rapid patents,
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising,
See, from their chimneys how the tall flame-fires stream.

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,
Thy wealthy daughter-states, Eastern and Western,
The varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Georgia, Texas, and the rest,
Thy limitless crops, grass, wheat, sugar, oil, corn, rice, hemp, hops,
Thy barns all fill'd, the endless freight-train and the bulging storehouse,
The grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples in thy orchards,
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal, thy gold and silver,
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

All thine, O sacred Union!
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines,
City and State, North, South, item and aggregate,
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute, thou! bulwark of all!
For well we know that while thou givest each and all, (generous as God,)
Without thee neither all nor each, nor land, home,

Nor ship, nor mine, nor any here this day secure,
Nor aught, nor any day secure.

9

And thou, the Emblem waving over all!
Delicate beauty, a word to thee, (it may be salutary,)
Remember thou hast not always been as here to-day so comfortably ensovereign'd,
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee flag,
Not quite so trim and whole and freshly blooming in folds of stainless silk,
But I have seen thee bunting, to tatters torn upon thy splinter'd staff,
Or clutch'd to some young color-bearer's breast with desperate hands,
Savagely struggled for, for life or death, fought over long,
'Mid cannons' thunder-crash and many a curse and groan and yell, and rifle-volleys cracking sharp,
And moving masses as wild demons surging, and lives as nothing risk'd,
For thy mere remnant grimed with dirt and smoke and sopp'd in [blood,
For sake of that, my beauty, and that thou might'st dally as now secure up there,
Many a good man have I seen go under.

Now here and these and hence in peace, all thine, O Flag!
And here and hence for thee, O universal Muse! and thou for them!

And here and hence O Union, all the work and workmen thine!
None separate from thee—henceforth One only, we and thou,
(For the blood of the children, what is it, only the blood
maternal?
And lives and works, what are they all at last, except the roads
to faith and death?)

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee, dear
Mother,
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee;
Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross or lucre
—it is for thee, the soul in thee, electric, spiritual!
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee! cities and States
in thee!
Our freedom all in thee! our very lives in thee!

Song of the Redwood Tree

I

A California song,
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe as air,
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads departing,
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and sky,
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

Farewell my brethren,
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,
My time has ended, my term has come.

Along the northern coast,
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves,
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and hoarse,
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven by strong arms,
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the redwood forest dense,
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.

Song of the Redwood Tree

The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not,
The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw men heard not,
As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand years to join the refrain,
But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves,
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-thick bark,
That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past only but the future.

You untold life of me,
And all you venerable and innocent joys,
Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many a summer sun,
And the white snows and night and the wild winds;
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys unreck'd by man,
(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have consciousness, identity,
And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,
Our time, our term has come.

Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,
We who have grandly fill'd our time;
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,

We welcome what we wrought for through the past,
And leave the field for them.
For them predicted long,
For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,
For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings!
In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta, Nevadas,
These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys, far Yosemite,
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.

Then to a loftier strain,
Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,
As if the heirs, the deities of the West,
Joining with master-tongue bore part.

Not wan from Asia's fetiches,
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and scaffolds everywhere,)
But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully builded thence,
These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,
To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.

You occult deep volitions,
You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on yourself, giving not taking law,

You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence life and love and aught that comes from life and love,
You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of America, (age upon age working in death the same as life,)
You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape and mould the New World, adjusting it to Time and Space,
You hidden national will lying in your abysms, conceal'd but ever alert,
You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be unconscious of yourselves,
Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface;
You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts, statutes, literatures,
Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas entire, lands of the Western shore,
We pledge, we dedicate to you.

For man of you, your characteristic race,
Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower proportionate to Nature,
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfin'd, uncheck'd by wall or roof,
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure,
Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas heed,) here fill his time,
To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,
To disappear, to serve.

Thus on the northern coast,
In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains, and the music of choppers' axes,
The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek, the groan,
Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices ecstatic, ancient and rustling,
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,
All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,
From the Cascade range to the Wahsatch, or Idaho far, or Utah,
To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,
The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity, the settlements, features all,
In the Mendocino woods I caught.

2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample lands,
The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado south,
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and mountain cliffs,
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent, cyclic chemistry,
The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface ripening, the rich ores forming beneath;
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing everywhere,

Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out to the whole world,
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island paradises of the Pacific,
Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the rivers, the railroads, with many a thrifty farm, with machinery,
And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow gold.

3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,)
I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of years, till now deferr'd,
Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart trees imperial,
In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir of the past so grand,
To build a grander future.

A Song for Occupations

1

A song for occupations!
In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I find the developments,
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!
Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd out of me, what would it amount to?
Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise statesman, what would it amount to?
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,
I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have my own whoever enjoys me,
I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.
If you stand at work in a shop I stand as nigh as the nighest in the same shop,

If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I demand as good as your brother or dearest friend,
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I must be personally as welcome,
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your sake,
If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you think I cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds?
If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side of the table,
If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her, why I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?
Is it you then that thought yourself less?
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?
Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than you?

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were once drunk, or a thief,
Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar and never saw your name in print,
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard, untouchable and untouching,

A Song for Occupations

It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle whether
you are alive or no,
I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every country,
in-doors and out-doors, one just as much as the other, I see,
And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,
The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on
farms,
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need yet always have,
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,
I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of value, but
offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes discussion
and print,
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than your
hearing and sight are from you,
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever provoked
[by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it,
You may read the President's message and read nothing about it there,
Nothing in the reports from the State department or Treasury department, or in the daily papers or weekly papers,
Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any accounts of stock.

3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of them is something grand,
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that it is happiness,
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation or bon-mot or reconnoissance,
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity, the greed that with perfect complaisance devours all things,
The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable joys and sorrows,
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the wonders that fill each minute of time forever,
What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?

A Song for Occupations

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or for the profits of your store?
Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's leisure, or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and form that it might be painted in a picture?
Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs sung?
Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious combinations and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the savans?
Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy names?
Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agriculture itself?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and the practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate them so high?
Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,
I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand,
I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,
I am this day just as much in love with them as you,
Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine — I do not say they are not divine,
I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still,
It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life,
Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than they are shed out of you.

4

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you whoever you are,
The President is there in the White House for you, it is not you who are here for him,
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here for them,
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities, the going and coming of commerce and mails, are all for you.

List close my scholars dear,
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere are tallied in you,
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would they all be?
The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it,
(Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines of the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by the instruments,
It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor the beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer singing his sweet romanza, nor that of the men's chorus, nor that of the women's chorus,
It is nearer and farther than they.

5

Will the whole come back then?
Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass? is there nothing greater or more?
Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul?

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-roofing, shingle-dressing,
Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of sidewalks by flaggers,
The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and [brick-kiln,
Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the darkness, echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,

Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-banks, men around feeling the melt with huge crowbars, lumps of ore, the due combining of ore, limestone, coal,

The blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at the bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-mill, the stumpy bars of pig-iron, the strong clean-shaped T-rail for rail-roads,

Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house, steam-saws, the great mills and factories,

Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades or window or door-lintels, the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect the thumb,

The calking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the fire under the kettle,

The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of the sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-knife of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work with ice,

The work and tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-maker,

Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-making, glazier's implements,

The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,

The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure, the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal, the making of all sorts of edged tools,

The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, everything that is done by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,

A Song for Occupations

Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twisting, distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-picking, electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,

Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines, ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons,

The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,

Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy figures and jets ;

Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,

The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the scalder's tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's maul, and the plenteous winterwork of pork-packing,

Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the barrels and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the high piles on wharves and levees,

The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads, coasters, fish-boats, canals ;

The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop, yard, store, or factory,

These shows all near you by day and night—workman! whoever you are, your daily life!

In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)

In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and me,

In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things, regardless of estimation,

In them the development good—in them all themes, hints, possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do not advise you to stop,
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as the best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest, lovingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place, not for another hour but this hour,
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother, nighest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife,
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in poems or anywhere,
You workwomen and workmen of these States having your own divine and strong life,
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that carved the supporting desk,
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and when they touch my body back again,
When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman and child convince,

A Song for Occupations

When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-watchman's daughter,
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my friendly companions,
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them as I do of men and women like you.

A Song of the Rolling Earth

I

A SONG of the rolling earth, and of words according,
Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines? those curves, angles, dots?
No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the ground and sea,
They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those delicious sounds out of your friends' mouths?
No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,
(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's, well-shaped, natural, gay,
Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the need of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate with theirs—my name is nothing to them,
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A Song of the Rolling Earth

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are words,
sayings, meanings,
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and women,
are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the earth,
The masters know the earth's words and use them more than
audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,
The earth neither lags nor hastens,
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the jump,
It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show just
as much as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so conceal'd
either,
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print, [willingly,
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am I to you?
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez!
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?
Will you squat and stifle there?)

The earth does not argue,
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,

Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit itself, possesses still underneath,
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of heroes, the wail of slaves,
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of young people, accents of bargainers,
Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great mother never fail,
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and reflection does not fail,
Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue does not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,
Of the ceaseless cotillons of sisters,
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and younger sisters,
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,
With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascinations of age,
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd,

Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror, while her eyes glance back from it,
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,
Duly approach and pass with their companions or a companion,
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the countenances of those who are with them,
From the countenances of children or women or the manly countenance,
From the open countenances of animals or from inanimate things,
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite apparition of the sky,
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning them,
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice with the same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing, carrying,
The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,

The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and dividing,
No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,
Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing,
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you,
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word of the past and present, and the true word of immortality;
No one can acquire for another—not one,
Not one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it cannot fail,
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and actress not to the audience,

And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his own,
or the indication of his own.

3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall
be complete,
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who
remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate
those of the earth,
There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate the
theory of the earth,
No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account,
unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the
earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that which
responds love,
It is that which contains itself, which never invites and never
[refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings
of the earth,
Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths
of the earth,
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print can-
not touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is best,
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as before,
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they then?
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that tells the best,
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,

It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects shall
appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and
encloses all and is faithful to all,
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that you
are not an iota less than they,
You shall be fully glorified in them.

Youth, Day, Old Age and Night.

Youth, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force, fascination,
Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal grace,
force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid — day of the immense sun, action,
ambition, laughter,
The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep and
restoring darkness.

Birds of Passage

Song of the Universal.

1

COME said the Muse,
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed is waiting.

2

Lo! keen-eyed towering science,
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,
Successive absolute fiats issuing.

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)
For it the partial to the permanent flowing,
For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution,
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.

Forth from their masks, no matter what,
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile and tears,
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of men and states,
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,
Only the good is universal.

3

Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,
Along the mighty labyrinth.

4

And thou America,
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,
Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by pathways broad
and new,
To the ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the past,
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all,
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,
Love like the light silently wrapping all,
Nature's amelioration blessing all,
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from us
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?
Nay but the lack of it the dream,
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
And all the world a dream.

Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Come my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the mines within,
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high plateaus,
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we come,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental blood intervein'd,
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the Northern,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for all!
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother mistress,
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress, (bend your heads all,)
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weapon'd mistress,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or falter,
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly fill'd,
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is fill'd,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all for us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their slaves,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the wicked,
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and planets,
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo wait behind,
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done your work,)
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp amid us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted doors?
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?
Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged nodding on our way?
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause oblivious,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,
Far, far off the daybreak call — hark! how loud and clear I hear it wind,
Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your places,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

To You.

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your feet and hands,
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners, troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from you,
Your true soul and body appear before me,
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops, work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating, drinking, suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be my poem,
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better than [you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb,
I should have made my way straight to you long ago,
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have chanted nothing but you.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,
None has understood you, but I understand you,
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice to yourself,
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfection in you,
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will never consent to subordinate you,
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre-figure of all,
From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of gold-color'd light,
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-color'd light,
From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon yourself all your life,
Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,
What you have done returns already in mockeries,
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you,
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,

I pursue you where none else has pursued you,
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustomed routine, if these conceal you from others or from yourself, they do not conceal you from me,
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these balk others they do not balk me,
The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in men or women that is not tallied in you,
There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good is [in you,
No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like carefully to you,
I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I sing the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!
These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you,
These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are immense and interminable as they,
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of apparent dissolution, you are he or she who is master or mistress over them,
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements, pain, passion, dissolution.

The hopples fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing sufficiency,
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest, whatever you are promulges itself,
Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided, nothing is scanted,
Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you are picks its way.

France.

The 18th Year of these States.

A GREAT year and place,
A harsh discordant natal scream out-sounding, to touch the mother's heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern sea,
Heard over the waves the little voice,
Saw the divine infant where she woke mournfully wailing, amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crash of falling buildings,
Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running, nor from the single corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those borne away in the tumbrils,
Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so shock'd at the repeated fusillades of the guns.

Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued retribution?
Could I wish humanity different?
Could I wish the people made of wood and stone?
Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

O Liberty! O mate for me!
Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve, to fetch them out in case of need,
Here too, though long represt, can never be destroy'd,
Here too could rise at last murdering and ecstatic,
Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

Hence I sign this salute over the sea,
And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,
But remember the little voice that I heard wailing, and wait with perfect trust, no matter how long,
And from to-day sad and cogent I maintain the bequeath'd cause, as for all lands,
And I send these words to Paris with my love,
And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,
For I guess there is latent music yet in France, floods of it,
O I hear already the bustle of instruments, they will soon be drowning all that would interrupt them,
O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,
It reaches hither, it swells me to joyful madness,
I will run transpose it in words, to justify it,
I will yet sing a song for you ma femme.

Myself and Mine.

Myself and mine gymnastic ever,
To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun, to sail a boat, to manage horses, to beget superb children,
To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among common people,
And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome them also,)
But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plenteous supreme Gods, that the States may realize them walking and talking.

Let me have my own way,
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account of the laws,
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold up agitation and conflict,
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that was thought most worthy.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly guilty of all your life?
Will you turn aside all your life? will you grub and chatter all your life?
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages, reminiscences,

Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak properly a single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and modern continually.

I give nothing as duties,
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I arouse unanswerable questions,
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?
What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by tender directions and indirections?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but listen to my enemies, as I myself do,
I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for I cannot expound myself,
I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me,
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista!
O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,
I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early riser, a steady grower,
Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the air, water, earth,
I perceive I have no time to lose.

Year of Meteors.

(1859–60.)

YEAR of meteors! brooding year!
I would bind in words retrospective some of your deeds and signs,
I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad,
I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair, mounted the scaffold in Virginia,
(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut close, I watch'd,
I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent, but trembling with age and your unheal'd wounds, you mounted the scaffold;)
I would sing in my copious song your census returns of the States,
The tables of population and products, I would sing of your ships and their cargoes,
The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some fill'd with immigrants, some from the isthmus with cargoes of gold,
Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward comes would I welcome give,
And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome to you from me, young prince of England!
(Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you pass'd with your cortege of nobles?
There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with attachment;)
Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam up my bay,
Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern swam up my bay, she was 600 feet long,

Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small craft I forget not to sing;
Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north flaring in heaven,
Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and clear shooting over our heads,
(A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of unearthly light over our heads,
Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone;)
Of such, and fitful as they, I sing — with gleams from them would I gleam and patch these chants,
Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good — year of forebodings!
Year of comets and meteors transient and strange — lo! even here one equally transient and strange!
As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone, what is this chant,
What am I myself but one of your meteors?

With Antecedents.

I

With antecedents,
With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations of past ages,
With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here, as I am,

With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,
With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the Saxon,
With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship, wars and journeys,
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the oracle,
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the troubadour, the crusader, and the monk,
With those old continents whence we have come to this new continent,
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there,
With the fading religions and priests,
With the small shores we look back to from our own large and present shores,
With countless years drawing themselves onward and arrived at these years,
You and me arrived—America arrived and making this year,
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,
We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we easily include them and more,
We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand amid evil and good,
All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light,
The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around us,
Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,)
I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,
I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I reject no part.

(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past? [tion.)
Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you recogni-

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god,
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true, without exception,
I assert that all past days were what they must have been,
And that they could nohow have been better than they were,
And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is, [are.
And that to-day and America could nohow be better than they

3

In the name of these States and in your and my name, the Past,
And in the name of these States and in your and my name, the Present time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,
(For the sake of him I typify, for the common average man's sake, your sake if you are he,)
And that where I am or you are this present day, there is the centre of all days, all races,
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races and days, or ever will come.

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